

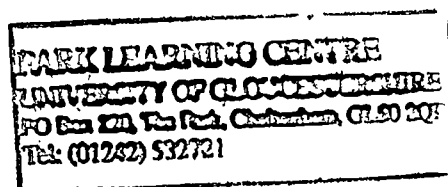
**A CENTURY OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN CLERICAL
OCCUPATIONS: 1850-1950**

**WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO THE ROLE OF THE SOCIETY
FOR PROMOTING THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN**

ANNE BRIDGER

A thesis submitted to the
University of Gloucestershire
in accordance with the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of Education & Social Sciences

December 2003



ABSTRACT

The study set out to answer two main questions: (a) what was the rôle of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW) – an organisation founded in 1859, still in existence today, but now known as the Society for Promoting the Training of Women (SPTW), in the evolution of clerical work as a suitable occupation for women; and (b) what continuities or discontinuities with nineteenth-century office employment could be identified in the experiences of women employed as clerical workers during the first half of the twentieth century?

To answer the first question the author examined the archives of SPEW which are lodged at Girton College, Cambridge. The second question was addressed by contacting a small sample of women, the majority born between 1903 and 1925, who were willing to be questioned about their experiences of office work during the inter-war years.

The research used a mixture of historiographic (archival analysis) and sociological (empirical) enquiry. It established that SPEW had played a pivotal rôle in opening up clerical employment to women; and demonstrated that early twentieth-century women had not capitalised on the efforts of those first-wave feminists even though office work was by then a major destination for women. Informants reported unequal pay, segregated workplaces, strictly-regulated social mores, and a patriarchal structure where women were concentrated in lower-level posts. These informants were content to view marriage and motherhood as their main 'career' in life.

Chapters 1 and 2 describe the author's background, including how her interest in the research topic developed, the rationale for the research, and the ways in which the study was carried out. Building on previous research, the following two chapters establish the historical framework, the founding of SPEW, its members' links with the Langham Place circle, and the practical activities in which the Society was engaged. Chapter 5 describes the range of women's white-collar employment during the period under review. Chapter 6 presents empirical data relating to the sample of 21 twentieth-century women; and finally Chapter 7 reflects on the ways in which the research evolved, comparing the evidence from the two eras, and suggests further possibilities for research.

DECLARATION

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of the University of Gloucestershire and is original except where indicated by specific reference in the text. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any other academic award. The thesis has not been presented to any other education institution in the United Kingdom or overseas.

Any views expressed in the thesis are those of the author and in no way represent those of the University.

Signed

..... Date *11-12-03*

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge all the encouragement, help, support and love from which I have benefited during the past three years, which have made it possible for me to complete this thesis.

First of all, for her unfailing support and ready availability, my grateful thanks are extended to my supervisor at the University, Professor Mary Fuller, whose patient encouragement and expert guidance have been invaluable, and without whom I might not have arrived at this point. She has always managed to find an appropriate 'cure' for my many bouts of self-doubt and it is largely due to her that I have been able to prepare this thesis within the set time-scale.

I am also greatly indebted to my second supervisor, Dr Pam Hirsch of Newnham College, Cambridge, not only for providing much-needed guidance in the historiographic aspects of my study, but also for offering constant encouragement (as well as frequent overnight hospitality!). I thank her for introducing me to the lives of so many inspiring historical figures: the depth of her knowledge regarding nineteenth-century feminists has been generously shared and has made a major contribution to any success I might achieve in making use of the archives.

My thanks are also extended to Mrs Kate Perry, the archivist at Girton College, Cambridge, where the SPEW archive is located. She guided me through the intricacies of archival research, and remained her calm, cheerful and cooperative self in spite of my many encroachments upon her time and her expertise.

My own enthusiasm and admiration for the characters emerging from the archive have been more than matched by that of Dr Ellen Jordan, an Australian academic whom I was fortunate to meet at the Girton archive early in my research programme. My task was helped to an enormous extent by her generous sharing of her own transcriptions of the archival evidence, as well as the depth of her knowledge about the Society, and I am most appreciative of her continuing friendship.

There are other acknowledgements due to the many members of the staff at the University of Gloucestershire, whose own areas of expertise have made important contributions to my work. My thanks are therefore offered to Maggie Wheel, who provided access to countless inter-library loans; to many other Learning Support Service staff for their courtesy and assistance; and to Jackie Arno in Reprographics for her help at the eleventh hour.

I would also like to acknowledge the financial assistance which I have received. In 2000, the Committee of the Society for Promoting the Training of Women offered a bursary to a research student who in return would make use of their archives. As the grateful recipient of that bursary and an accompanying research studentship from the University of Gloucestershire, I have been given access to those archives and am happy that as a result I have established the influential rôle which the Society played in opening up clerical employment to women.

My thanks are also offered to the unnamed women whose stories are told in Chapter 6, who so generously gave their time to be interviewed or contribute written evidence to add to my knowledge of twentieth-century office work.

Not least, I want to say thank you to my family. Without their loving encouragement, particularly that of my husband Paddy, and daughter Jo, I could not have embarked upon this project, let alone completed it. Not only have they provided support when it was so often needed, but they have also been prepared to act as 'sounding boards' or as proof-readers on many occasions. They have even done their best to sound as enthusiastic as I am about the subject-matter which has consumed me for so long.

CONTENTS

	Page
Abstract	
Declaration	
Acknowledgements	
Contents	
List of Illustrations	
List of Tables	
List of Appendices	
Key to Abbreviations Used in the Study	i
Part One	
Chapter One: Background to the Study	
1.1 Introduction	1
1.2 Personal History	2
1.3 The Society's Bursary	4
1.4 The Nature of the Archive	6
1.4.1 Accessing the Archive's Contents	6
1.5 The Informants	7
1.6 Terminology and Abbreviations Used in the Study	8
Chapter Two: Research Strategy and Reflections on Methodology	
2.1 Introduction	10
2.2 The Research Strategy	12
2.3 The Research Stages	16
2.3.1 The Archive	16
2.3.2 The Twentieth-Century Sample	18
2.3.3 Acquiring Evidence	20
2.4 Reflections on the Methodology	22
2.4.1 The Archive	23
2.4.2 The Informants	24
2.5 Ethical Considerations	28
2.6 False Starts and Limitations	30
2.7 Outline of the Thesis	31

Part Two

Chapter Three: Jessie Boucherett, The Langham Place Group, and SPEW

3.1 Introduction	32
3.2 Jessie Boucherett	37
3.3 Avonbank School, Stratford-upon-Avon	40
3.4 Langham Place	43
3.5 Beginnings and Endings	46
3.5.1 Launching the Society	46
3.5.2 Establishing the Identity of SPEW's Founder	49
3.5.3 Changes to SPEW's Committee	51
3.5.4 Tensions Within the <i>EWJ</i>	53

Chapter Four: The Work of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women 1859-1905

4.1 Introduction	58
4.2 The Society at Work	62
4.3 The Part Played by the Society in Launching Women into Clerical Occupations	67
4.4 Financing SPEW's Ventures	76
4.5 Nannies and Gatekeepers	80
4.6 Respectability, Status and Social Class	87
4.7 The Turn of the Century: A Shift in Emphasis	92

Chapter Five: Women as Clerical Workers 1850-1950

5.1 Introduction	97
5.2 The Nature and Origins of Clerical Work	98
5.3 Working Conditions	102
5.4 Clerical Opportunities for Women: False Hopes of Equality?	104
5.5 SPEW's Contribution to White-Collar Employment	106
5.5.1 Banking	108
5.5.2 Book-Keeping	108
5.5.3 Insurance	110
5.5.4 Law Copying	111
5.5.5 Plan Tracing	112
5.5.6 Post Office Clerks	114
5.5.7 Shorthand Writing	117
5.5.8 Telegraphs	119
5.5.9 Telephones	122

5.5.10 Typewriting: The Ultimate Answer to the Woman Problem?	124
5.5.11 The Growth of Secretarial Training Colleges	130

Part Three

Chapter Six: Clerical Work in the Twentieth Century

6.1 Introduction	132
6.2 Office Life Between the World Wars	138
6.3 The Effects of World Wars on Women's Office Lives	140
6.4 Standards of Behaviour	144
6.5 Social Differences	147
6.6 Occupational Hierarchies	149
6.7 Getting the Job	157
6.8 Working Lives	160
6.9 Work and Marriage	169
6.10 Additional Insights into Office Life	172

Part Four

Chapter Seven: Reflections and Future Directions

7.1 Introduction	175
7.2 Two Eras Compared	176
7.2.1 Nineteenth Century	177
7.2.2 Twentieth Century	178
7.3 A Study Within a Corpus of Work	180
7.4 Reflections	183
7.5 Areas for Further Study	184

Endnotes	186-198
-----------------	---------

References

Appendices

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Page	Illustration Number	Subject
17a	2.1	Cross-Writing (Correspondence from Boucherett to Mackenzie)
21a	2.2	Comptometer
31a	3.1	Jessie Boucherett
37	3.2	Jessie Boucherett
37a	3.3	Willingham Hall, the Boucherett family seat
40a	3.4	Avonbank House, after its purchase by the Byerley sisters
45a	3.5	The Victoria Press
57a	4.1	SPEW's Office at Berners Street
96a	4.2	A 1920s General Office – Messrs Cadbury
117a	5.1	Isaac Pitman's Shorthand System – First Two Plates of Pitman's first stenograph shorthand; <i>and</i> Pitman's 'Penny Plate' which offered free postal tuition
121a	5.2	The Central Telegraph Office, London, 1874
127a	5.3	Typewriters and Type-Writer 1878-1907
131a	6.1	The General Office at Huntley and Palmers, Reading, c.1937

LIST OF TABLES

Page	Table Number	Title
13	2.1	Temporal Plan
19a	2.2	Summary of Sources for 20 th Century Informants
19a	2.3	Breakdown of Data Collection from 20 th Century Sample
51a	3.1	Members Present at SPEW General Committee Meetings During 1862
76	4.1	SPEW's Income, Selected Years, 1863-64/1914-15
93	4.2	Examples of Interest-Free Loans Granted, and Levels of Repayments 1897-1909
101	5.1	Number of Clerks Employed in England and Wales, 1861-1911
102	5.2	Percentage of Female Workers in Major Occupational Groups in GB, 1911-1966
148	6.1	Post-School Skills Training Experienced by the Informants
150	6.2	Informants' Ages on, and Reasons for, Leaving School
151	6.3	Informants' First Jobs
167-8	6.4	Examples of Range of Work Done by Informants Subsequent to First Employment
171a	6.5	The Changing Composition of Office Employment 1870-1950
173a	6.6	Summary of Informants' Personal History
179a	7.1	Summary of Continuities and Discontinuities Related to Women's Office Employment 1850-1950

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix Number	Subject of Appendix
1 (i-xi)	SPEW/SPTW Listings, Girton College Archive, Cambridge
2 (i-ii)	Some Notable Events in SPEW/SPTW's History; <i>and</i> Occupations and trades into which women were placed 1859-1909 via SPEW's initiatives or assistance
3 (i-viii)	The Founder of SPEW – Correspondence on the subject between Committee Member Mrs Locke King and Jane Crowe, Secretary; Jane Crowe's reply to Mrs Locke King; Boucherett's letters to SPEW Chairman and to Bessie Parkes
4 (i-ii)	SPEW's Minutes – extracts illustrating Gertrude Jane King's handwriting style
5	Memorial and Scholarship Funds administered by SPEW/SPTW
6	Mrs Eliza Mary Haweis 1848-1898
7	Letter accompanying 'pilot' questionnaire
7a	Questionnaire – Clerical Work
7b (i-ii)	Notes from research diary, relating to Appendix 7a
8	Introductory letter to old girls' association potential informants
8a	Covering etter accompanying questionnaire for KOGA informants
8b	Questionnaire for KOGA informants
9	Transcription of Illustration 2.1 – Cross-writing
10	Letter sent to editors of <i>Saga</i> and <i>The Lady</i> magazines
11	Letter to editor of Reading local paper and copy of printed version
12	Explanatory letter to informants no longer included in the survey
13	Correspondence from Boucherett to Mackenzie re: Freedom of Labour
13a (i-ii)	Brief details of the Freedom of Labour Defence group
14 (i-ii)	SPEW's 1860 Report to subscribers after affiliation to NAPSS
15	The composition of SPEW's Committee after affiliation to NAPSS
16	SPEW's rules after affiliation to NAPSS (February 1860)
17 (i-ii)	Publications of Jessie Boucherett 1860-1896
18 (i-ii)	Letter to <i>The Times</i> from Matilda Hays 1862; <i>and</i> Letter from Mr Edgar to Miss Crowe
19 (i-ii)	Categories of Feminism, as identified by Olive Banks
20 (i-ii)	Additional donations from Boucherett to SPEW 1860-1905

Appendix Number	Subject of Appendix
21	1867 Amendments to 1860 Rules
22 (i-ii)	The Case of Mrs Irwin (extracts from Minutes)
23 (i-ii)	Obituary and <i>In Memoriam</i> appreciation of Mrs Constance Hoster, 1864-1939
24 (i-ii)	Bye-Laws or Rules from Annual Reports 1909 and 1932
25	Example of reports on book-keeping successes 1880
26	Maria Rye's letter to <i>The Times</i> 1862
27 (i-iii)	Extracts from <i>Jimmies' Journal</i> 1934

KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE STUDY

AA to VV	Codes used to identify informants in Part Three of the study, plus dates of birth
AR	Annual Reports of SPEW/SPTW. See Appendix 1, page iv, GCIP SPTW 2/1-2/3)
C & G	City and Guilds of London Technical Institute
CABMF	Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Fund (administered via SPEW sub-committee). See Appendix 1, page ii, GCIP SPTW 1/9 SPTW
CBEW	Central Bureau for the Employment of Women (founded 1899; incorporated 1923; wound up 1941)
d.	penny (pre-decimal coinage)
DNB	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i>
EN.	Endnote reference
EWJ and EWR	<i>The English Woman's Journal</i> and <i>The Englishwoman's Review</i>
EWWETF	Educated Women's War Emergency Training Fund (see Ch.4, 4.5)
EWWLTF	Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund (see Ch.4, 4.5)
GCIP SPTW	Girton College code for the SPTW archives. See Appendix 1, pages i-xi
GCM	General Committee Minutes (SPEW). See Appendix 1, page i, GCIP SPTW 1/1
GFS	Girls' Friendly Society
GFS AJA	<i>Girls' Friendly Society Associates' Journal and Advertiser</i>
GOP	<i>Girl's Own Paper</i>
KOGA	Acronym for the old girls' association attended by some of the 20 th century informants
ILN	<i>Illustrated London News</i>
LPG	Langham Place Group
MCM	Managing Committee Minutes (SPEW). See Appendix 1, page i, GCIP SPTW 1/2
NAPSS	National Association for the Promotion of Social Science
NLCS	North London Collegiate School
OPCS	Office of Population Censuses and Surveys
PLTF	Pioneer Loan Training Fund
R-G	Registrar-General
RSA	Royal Society of Arts
s. or /	shillings, pre-decimal coinage: the Minutes use both versions
SPEW	Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (founded July 1859)
SPTW	Society for Promoting the Training of Women (title of SPEW changed after 1926)
WJ	<i>The Waverley Journal</i>
YW	<i>The Young Woman</i>

PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

A CENTURY OF WOMEN'S EMPLOYMENT IN CLERICAL OCCUPATIONS:

1850-1950

with particular reference to the rôle of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women

'Among the various employments open to women none is more suitable than that of clerks and book-keepers.' (*Annual Report [AR]* 1879, GCIP SPTW 2/1)

'Few occupations [than those of clerks or book-keepers] are more suitable to girls.' (*AR* 1882, GCIP SPTW 2/1)

'My mother thought typing would be useful: it's always something to fall back on.' (Suzanne Frost 1981)

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Part One of this study contains two chapters, the first of which outlines my own employment history as both an example of the ways in which clerical work formed the beginning of many women's working lives, and an indication of my ongoing interest in the area of employment selected for study. It also introduces the rôle of the Society for Promoting the Training of Women (SPTW: formerly known as the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women - SPEW) in the project.¹ Chapter 2 presents the research strategy, outlining the approaches which I adopted.

In addition to tracing the efforts of early feminists in establishing clerical work as a suitable job for a woman during the nineteenth century, the study includes first-hand accounts of the employment histories of a group of women born in the first quarter of the twentieth century. Their experiences as office workers are compared with the nineteenth-century situation evidenced through the primary source of SPEW's archives as well as through secondary sources.

From the standpoint of the twenty-first century, it may be difficult to remember that women have not always engaged in clerical work. Contemporary offices are filled with women workers, carrying out every conceivable function in the furtherance of commercial operations. It was not always so, as this study demonstrates. Whether twentieth-century women have been able to capitalise on the foundations for independent, autonomous self-sufficiency through employment, thus building on the efforts of those 'first-wave' feminists who made it possible for nineteenth-century women to occupy such posts for the first time, is also the subject of this study.²

1.2 Personal History

My personal employment history is fairly typical of an era which offered women a broad choice of white-collar employment, which was comparatively well paid, and constituted a more 'respectable' alternative (in terms of social status) to working in a shop or a factory. That many female school-leavers – myself included – viewed office work as an almost inevitable destination was perhaps an indication of how far it had become women's main employment by the middle of the twentieth century – at least until marriage and motherhood supplanted it. My own 'life history' may serve to explain my interest in the subject of this research project.

Aged ten when I started at my girls' school in Yorkshire, and transferring to a similar grammar school in Reading for the start of the fourth year (when my parents moved the family south), I was still some months short of my sixteenth birthday when I sat the General Schools Certificate (GSC) in the fifth year. I was one of the majority from my intake year who left school at that stage, rather than embarking upon a sixth form course.³ Although my parents had no personal experience of extended secondary education, my father would have liked me to stay on, but I was still resentful at having had to leave my Yorkshire school and too disaffected with my 'new' one to remain beyond the fifth year.

I drifted into my first office job soon after leaving school, in due course acquiring the skill of shorthand at evening classes, and had become a 'secretary' working for the managing director of a large clothing company by the time I was seventeen. Before my eighteenth birthday I accepted a job in the editorial department of the BBC's Monitoring Service: initially as a copy typist, but promoted to editorial clerk (still involving typing) soon afterwards. I stayed at the BBC - very happily - for six years. For the last two of those years, during which I married, I also taught typewriting in evening classes at the local technical college. I had taken on the teaching rôle as a result of encouragement from my BBC colleagues, who suggested that as my typing skills were somewhat above the average, I should be helping others to achieve similar standards.⁴ I was subsequently offered an appointment as full-time lecturer in the secretarial department of that college, which I accepted in January 1958. By this stage, I had rekindled my dormant

interest in extending my own academic qualifications, so in addition to achieving teaching certificates in secretarial subjects over the next few years, I also acquired General Certificate of Education Advanced level certificates in three other subjects.

A period of full-time teaching at the college was followed by a career break while I brought up my two children. My subsequent return to part-time teaching led to my being 'head-hunted' to set up a new commercial department at a local secondary school. Once my children were settled at school I took a one-year full-time secondary teacher-training course in London which qualified me to teach 11-18 year-olds, returning to full-time school teaching in Berkshire as a head of department at the end of that year. I added sociology to the subjects I was teaching and embarked on a part-time in-service course culminating in the acquisition of a Diploma in the Advanced Study of Education. During the next ten years of full-time teaching – and raising two children - I headed two departments (concurrently) in a large comprehensive school, completing an in-service Honours degree during the same period; became a deputy headteacher at an Oxfordshire comprehensive school and whilst there, through a further part-time course, achieved the post-graduate degree by research of Master of Philosophy.⁵

My early introduction to office work thus opened doors to a career which culminated in nearly forty years as an educationist, the last twenty of which encompassed teaching in further and higher education as well as in schools, and appointments as deputy head, teacher trainer, education adviser, management trainer and OFSTED secondary-schools inspector (many of those rôles being carried out concurrently). I had also spent much of my school-teaching time in designing and running careers and social education programmes involving work experience placement schemes for pupils, and arranging short-term secondments for teachers to industry and commerce. Consequently I was very excited at the idea of carrying out a research programme which combined a historical perspective with a socio-economic enquiry into a field which had occupied so much of my own adult life.

A career profile such as mine is representative of large numbers of women of my generation during the second half of the twentieth century. Leaving school 'early', in spite of being a 'scholarship girl', and becoming a clerical worker - perhaps later a teacher - is not unusual amongst my generation. What set us apart from my parents' era was the opportunity to acquire *qualifications*, irrespective of one's family's ability to pay for schooling or further training.⁶

Many of the women whose lives I have studied during this research programme were born at a time when Britain was in the grip of an economic depression, and extending education beyond the (then) statutory leaving age of fourteen was therefore denied to many, as children's earnings were needed to supplement family incomes.⁷ The extent to which women were able to capitalise on their own intellectual abilities was also affected by the social mores prevailing in the first half of the century, specifically a culture where

women took getting married for granted, followed by the arrival of children and the consequent curtailment of a working life. Part Three of the thesis examines that situation.

The Victorian women whose experiences form the largest part of this study experienced rather different pressures. There was a considerable demographic imbalance, which meant that thousands of nineteenth-century women had little expectation of marrying and unless their fathers or brothers could support them, they would have to find employment. How the very limited choices for work considered suitable for women were widened, in a climate where women - particularly middle-class women - were thought to lose caste if they received payment for their skills, is set out in Part Two of this study.

My involvement with this topic began late in the year 2000, when an opportunity arose whereby I might be able to further my unfulfilled ambition of completing my education by working for a doctorate. The University of Gloucestershire (at that time Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education) advertised a research studentship, carrying with it the offer of an additional bursary from the Society for Promoting the Training of Women (SPTW), in return for use being made of the Society's hitherto largely-untapped archives. These had fairly recently been deposited at Girton College library, in Cambridge. The University's advertisement listed three possible areas of investigation which the archive could support, one of which related to 'the crafts of the commercial world'. I interpreted this as offering an opportunity to link my early career in office work with my later knowledge of the wider world of work as well as with my academic experience, and was very grateful that my applications for the studentship and the bursary were successful. My three-year programme of study began formally on 1 January 2001.

My thesis aims to present a systematic exploratory enquiry, informed by a social science rather than a strictly historical perspective, using well-established techniques of data collection and analysis. As a non-historian, I had no preconceived notions of the best way to extract the necessary information from the Society's archive, but as my thesis would focus on a comparison between the experiences of the earliest nineteenth-century female office workers and those of a representative group of women alive today, one of my first tasks was to uncover any evidence about the conditions and circumstances of Victorian clerical workers, using the archive and secondary sources; another was to find, and then to interview, an appropriate number of informants who had worked in offices in the early part of the twentieth century. The epistemological approach would be broadly feminist, but at the start of the process I had no preconceived notions of the eventual theoretical paradigm.

1.3 The Society's Bursary

The Society referred to above - the SPTW - was founded in 1859, under its original title of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW), and it continues to function today. Its present-day

activities are to provide ‘interest-free loans, repayable at realistic rates once the trainee is in work’, to ‘women of all ages seeking to improve their career prospects by undertaking further education and training’ (SPTW Publicity Brochure, 2002). These aims differ from those which prompted the Society’s founding in the middle of the nineteenth century, as will be explicated more fully below (see Chapter 4). At that time, its Committee set out to ‘lessen the great hardship that existed among those forced to earn their living’ in the few menial occupations open to middle-class women, by pioneering ‘new types of employment for women, and to improve the very low standard of education prevailing’ for the majority of girls (SPTW *ibid.*).

Towards the end of 1996, SPTW committee members decided that the considerable amount of documentation which had been amassed since 1859 should be accessible to researchers. The papers had always been kept in the possession of a succession of the Society’s secretaries, but on retirement from the church ministry in 1996 its then secretary, the Rev. Brian Harris, stored the records (in tea chests, cartons and boxes) in his garage until a more permanent site could be found. Negotiations subsequently took place with the Mistress of Girton College, Cambridge, and the documents were transported to the College in January 1997. Girton College had been selected because of its links with one of SPEW’s influential early subscribers and supporters, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. This woman had been instrumental in the founding of Girton College alongside its first Principal, Emily Davies, herself also one of SPEW’s members. The papers were subjected to a preliminary listing by the Girton archivist, transferred to boxes, and stored in her office. With the exception of a short article published by Michelle Tusan in 2000, based on some of those records, it was believed that no further use had been made of the papers prior to the SPTW Committee’s decision to offer a financial incentive to a research student if their historical record could form part of a post-graduate project. However, one other article had been written the previous year, but at the time the Committee were unaware of that fact. This included an examination of the rôle which SPEW had played in having women admitted to the Pharmaceutical Society.⁸

As the recipient of a University of Gloucestershire research studentship, I have been supervised by Professor Dr. Mary Fuller, of the Faculty of Education and Social Science at that University. The historiographic aspects of my study were the responsibility of my second supervisor, Dr. Pam Hirsch of Newnham College, University of Cambridge.⁹

In addition to my tutors, the Girton College archivist, Mrs Kate Perry, has been a further important source of support and assistance. During my visits to her office, she was at all times willing to provide the relevant files and additional information as needs emerged, as well as offering a patient and ‘interested’ ear when I wanted to share some exciting find during my sessions at the library. She was particularly helpful as the period of closure of her office drew near (see 1.4 below).

1.4 The Nature of the Archive

The SPEW/SPTW archive contains six manuscript Minute books covering nineteenth-century years, and a further six volumes for the twentieth, as well as additional files or folders holding the Minutes of various sub-committees; microfilm copies of Annual Reports 1861-1989; financial records and files relating to individual trainees; correspondence linked to public appeals for donations; a file on the Society's early history; and a large number of additional folders containing correspondence and other data. None of these had been fully catalogued during the period of my researches, but the archivist carried out a more comprehensive listing just prior to the 2003 closure so I have added the appropriate citations. (See Appendix 1 for the listings.)

1.4.1 Accessing the Archive's Contents In the period from January 2001 to the library's closure at the end of April 2003 (see Chapter 2, 2.2) I visited the archive as often as possible, but not to a set timetable. The visits to Cambridge had to be balanced against the acquisition of the other evidence which would be contributing to my thesis: finding a sample of twentieth-century office workers, as well as carrying out an extensive reading programme. The initial task was to find out what information there might be, but it seemed sensible to begin with the Society's origins and the names of its members. A file labelled 'Early History' was therefore my starting point. Although I had set out to uncover evidence of women's entry into clerical work, and to trace the Society's rôle in that process, as an inexperienced historian I was unprepared for the feelings of excitement which the contents of that folder were to arouse in me.

Few of the papers were stored in date order, so my first few visits were spent copying a range of documents on to a laptop computer. Some records consisted of scrappy pieces of paper such as one containing a list of SPEW's achievements up to 1909, which had a red-ink addition covering the years to 1941, and a list of the many occupations and trades into which they had placed women (see Appendix 2). It later became apparent that some of these notes (mostly undated) were drafts for annual reports or publicity leaflets.

Amongst such items were letters which were to have an impact on the ways in which I would use the archive for my study, although some tempted me down various 'side-roads' which at times I was in danger of following to the detriment of my originally-stated 'destination'. Some of this correspondence established – apparently for the first time – the facts about the identity of the Society's founder Jessie Boucherett, a situation which has been misreported in a number of publications (discussed in Chapter 3). Gradually, too, some of the other key personalities began to emerge from the pages. In due course, I revisited this file once the significance of the names it contained became of interest to my enquiries.¹⁰

The focus of my thesis is set out in more detail in the next chapter. Put briefly, I hoped to investigate the contribution made by the Committee members of this small Society to the feminist cause. Their efforts in

furthering women's opportunities for economic independence and giving them greater autonomy over their own lives reflect more than one of the nine categories of 'first-wave' feminism which Banks has identified, and which are considered further in Chapter 4, 4.1 (Banks 1986; and see Appendix 19). In addition to confirmation of that theoretical paradigm, I uncovered documentary evidence of the relationship of SPEW to a number of training institutions which have since become 'household names', for example the Pitman Colleges. SPEW members' involvements in movements which have received wider attention from historians and social scientists, for example the late nineteenth-century campaigns for women's enfranchisement, and against restrictive legislation, are also confirmed by their records.

The archive, whilst extensive, is nevertheless not complete, as formal Minute books date only from January 1860, a few months after SPEW was launched; and there are also references to some documents being destroyed 'as a result of enemy action' during the Second World War (*AR* 1941, GCIP SPTW 2/1). However, it has been possible to trace some of the activities which occurred between July and December 1859 from later references in the archive, as well as through published material such as obituaries of personnel.¹¹ Sadly, there are very few personal letters amongst the documentation. Irrespective of these gaps, the archive is remarkably rich in detail, due in no small measure to the very detailed Minutes kept by its longest-serving Secretary, Gertrude Jane King.¹²

Many 'stories' which the archive could tell have had to remain unreported in this study as they do not contribute to my theme. There are, for example, the events leading to the setting up of a fund in memory of Eliza Mary Haweis.¹³ This small fund still contributes to the sums which today's SPTW Committee are able to lend to young women, but the circumstances of its launch were a matter of intrigue and duplicity on the part of her widower.¹⁴

1.5 The Informants

For the social-science aspects of this study evidence was obtained from a sample of women who agreed that their employment and educational histories could be represented in my work. I aimed to include women from the oldest age group possible: that is, from a generation older than I but who are still comparatively healthy and capable of being questioned about their early lives. Not surprisingly, of the twenty-one women who eventually formed my sample, only one was born in the first decade of the twentieth century; five others were born before 1920, the rest spanning the next decade.

I wished to find out how far the efforts and aspirations of the Victorian pioneers had benefited early-twentieth-century clerical workers, in terms of economic independence and concepts of gender inequality. My original intention had been to include two cohorts to represent the twentieth century, and subsequently to compare the three eras. One sample – the one retained for this study – represents women who started

work for the first time prior to the outbreak of the second World War. The second group would have been made up of women whose secondary schooling post-dated the passing of the momentous 1944 Butler Education Act (see EN.6). Chapter 2 includes an explanation as to why this latter group was eventually excluded; it also sets out the methods by which the samples were contacted.

The chosen methods are consistent with a feminist approach, insofar as they attempt to allow the women's voices to be heard – whether metaphorically through the pages of nineteenth-century documents, or from transcriptions of tape-recordings. Grounded theory approaches were discounted, since I embarked on the research with clear ideas of what I would be looking for and grounded theorists allow the data (ie the informants' own interpretations) to determine the epistemology (see Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss 1987). Nor are the standpoints of positivism helpful in a narrative approach such as is adopted here. Although I am persuaded that economic determinism has a bearing on the way these women's lives unfolded, I cannot accept that as a result they were devoid of choice, freedom, individuality or moral responsibility.

My methodology could be defined as exploiting a form of interpretative paradigms, as the subject-matter is so familiar to me. This familiarity could be a potential danger to objective enquiry, because as a researcher I could be 'so close to the situation that [I] neglect certain, often tacit, aspects of it'; and perhaps I could be accused of accepting uncritically the perspectives of the participants, with the focus 'on the past and the present rather than the future' (Cohen *et al.* 2000:157). In Chapter 7 I reflect upon the research process, during which my original questions and objectives underwent some change of emphasis.

1.6 Terminology and Abbreviations Used in the Study

Throughout this study, many of the terms used to describe the occupational categories forming the basis of discussion are interchangeable. For example, I make no distinction between the generic 'white-collar worker' and the various categories of clerical work which grew out of the eventual division of labour within the commercial world. Post Office or bank clerks, typists, secretaries, telephonists and other Civil Service office staff are amongst the categories considered separately in Chapter 5, but my thesis uses a range of labels for all such divisions. The term 'clerical worker' is in this thesis a 'catch-all' to distinguish such women from other forms of employment which they might have entered instead, for example in industry, agriculture, retailing, various crafts or the professions.

The twentieth-century women are usually referred to as 'informants', but to vary the vocabulary the terms interviewee, sample, or cohort are employed occasionally. I have avoided the use of the word 'respondent' as this term can imply a passive relationship, more in keeping with highly structured methodology, where

the same format and even sequence of words is used in each interview (see Cohen *et al.* 2000:121). The precise procedure of data collection which I adopted is set out in the next chapter.

I have used a script typeface for direct quotations from SPEW Minutes and from informants' evidence, but all other quotations retain the typeface of the text. Many abbreviations have been employed throughout the study, for ease of presentation, and the key to these is given on page (i). When referring to the Society, I have followed the practice of using the somewhat unfortunate acronym SPEW for its nineteenth-century activities, and SPTW thereafter, even though the Society's name (and therefore its initials) did not change until after 1926 (see EN.1).

CHAPTER TWO

RESEARCH STRATEGY AND REFLECTIONS ON METHODOLOGY

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the subject of the research, and sets out the enquiry methods considered and adopted or rejected. It outlines the ways in which the two strands of the research evolved (historiographic and sociological) and reflects on the extent to which the methodology was successful in gathering evidence of the relationship between women's monopoly of clerical occupations during the twentieth century, and the pioneering work of nineteenth-century feminists.

By undertaking this study, I have set out to understand the process by which women first embarked on 'white-collar' office employment – an aspect of the economy which they came to monopolise in the twentieth century – as well as the ways in which clerical work during that century reflected or contrasted with that of our Victorian forebears. This process is part of the wider issues relating to gender considerations, and is therefore relevant to an examination of the extent to which SPEW's efforts on behalf of women have empowered them to take charge of their lives. At the time when SPEW was launched, the label of 'feminism' had not then been applied to the body of ideas which was emerging.¹⁵ Nevertheless, the activities in which many of the Society's members were engaged were overtly feminist, with their leaders playing an increasingly public rôle in a movement which had gathered pace by the turn of the nineteenth century. How far the later generation of women sampled in this study could be said to have built on that legacy of a feminist identity or instead, as postmodernists might claim, moved closer to a 'slave' identity is considered in Chapter 7 (Deleuze propounded the theory that if there is a 'master' group, there are also people willing to be slaves. On Deleuze, see Bogue 1989:16-18.)

My interest in the topic, as I have said, arose out of my own employment history. Clerical/secretarial work had not only been the foundation of my working life, but also that of many of my contemporaries, and for a number of us it had led to different careers. In embarking on this research, I had originally intended to include evidence from my own generation. This chapter includes a brief explanation as to why I eventually chose to include only the first two groups (the Victorians and the 1930s representatives) rather than all three (see 2.6). The chapter also outlines how I set about my programme of study.

Prior to starting the research, I had little knowledge of the ways in which women had originally viewed the opportunities presented by clerical work, and although I was aware that office employment might offer women a relatively remunerative means of earning a living, I suspected that for the majority it was not necessarily, in itself, recognised as a 'route to the top' of the commercial world. Whether circumstances were different in the nineteenth century would be ascertained through the archival study.

My research proposal thus posed two questions:

1. What was the rôle of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW; later 'Training' of Women: SPTW) in the evolution of clerical work as an occupation for middle-class women in the nineteenth century?

2. What continuities and discontinuities can be identified in the SPEW/SPTW discourse concerning clerical work as an occupation for women prior to 1900, and in the life histories of a small sample of women clerical workers beginning their employment during the 1930s?

The study's objectives were specified as follows:

1. To document the ways in which training for clerical work emerged from SPEW/SPTW's mission to encourage women's economic independence.
2. To identify and analyse continuities and discontinuities between the Society's original agenda (for example empowerment, autonomy, independence) concerning clerical work, and the experience of those women clerical workers whose working lives began prior to the Second World War.

The first research question was addressed mainly through documentary analysis of the primary source of SPEW's archives, concentrating on the Victorian era. Chapter 3 traces the development of the feminist identities which provided the background to SPEW's activities. Chapter 4 examines the practical ways in which the members used their social, cultural, symbolic and money capital to bring about social change; and Chapter 5 summarises the ways in which women gradually gained footholds in a broad range of white-collar occupations.

To answer the second question I took a number of steps in order to find women from the oldest age group possible, who had had a working experience appropriate to my interest area (see below). Once in possession of information from both the historical and the sociological sources, I hoped to be able to draw conclusions about the extent to which the twentieth-century group had benefited from or built on the ground-breaking initiatives of their Victorian forebears, and formulate theories based on the evidence.

In a rigorous approach to the collection of data, I ensured that I acted ethically in both my handling of the documentary analysis of the archive and during the interviewing process. At the archive I took an early decision to ignore all SPTW documents relating to people who could still be alive. Similarly, there were matters which came up in discussions with informants which I felt I did not have a 'licence' to explore (see 2.5 on ethical considerations; also Chapter 6). Rigour was similarly applied to other stages of the research process, for example in an analysis of informants' evidence. This involved manually categorizing individual responses, attempting to quantify the frequency of the use of certain words, searching each transcript for references to a specific topic, as well as noting idiographic examples. That exercise did not provide sufficient quantifiable evidence to be tabulated here; but it was nevertheless an important preliminary stage in the interpretation of my results.

2.2 The Research Strategy

The temporal plan (see Table 2.1), which was presented with my revised research proposal in October 2001, has proved to be largely accurate, although some adjustments were made in the light of changing needs or unforeseen circumstances. For example, the survey of literature continued throughout the programme rather than being confined to the first fifteen to eighteen months, and the interview schedule was largely complete by the end of the first year. Transcriptions of SPEW documentation did not proceed as anticipated, for two main reasons. Although I had expected to have access to the SPEW archive throughout my study period, at Christmas 2002 I learned that the Girton library would not be accessible to any outside readers after 30 April 2003, and would remain closed for refurbishment until October 2004. This meant that the archive would not be available to me during the late summer or autumn of 2003, the period when I had originally thought I would be able to carry out any cross-checking or verification of quotations, for example. Unfortunately my journeys to Cambridge were further interrupted due to my suffering an immobilising accident in January 2003, as a result of which I was unable to travel anywhere until March that year, so I used the remaining time (March and April) for those cross-checks at the expense of being able to continue with further researches.

In spite of those difficulties, I believe that the rigorous approach which I had taken to the gathering of archival evidence prior to those events has enabled me to make informed judgments about the rôle and effectiveness of the Society. A similarly systematic approach was applied to the collection of evidence from the sample of twentieth-century informants, through a variety of procedures, which are detailed below.

I have drawn upon two different disciplines in attempting to answer the research questions. The first – historiographic and historical – is employed in the analysis of the nineteenth-century primary documents, supplemented by a range of related literature. In addition to providing background information on the

origins of clerical work, on Victorian society, and on the wider socio-economic conditions of the times, that literature helped me to trace the activities of early feminists, through which upper- and lower-middle-class women began to emerge from the private into the public sphere.¹⁶

TABLE 2.1

Temporal Plan*

Jan 2001-Dec 2003											
Months	1-3	4-6	7-9	10-12	13-15	16-18	19-21	22-24	25-32	33-34	35-36
Literature Reviews											
Induction (Historiography)											
Transcribing SPTW Archives											
Preliminary & Later Analysis Era 1											
Develop Interview Schedules											
Questionnaires & Interviews Era 2											
Reading (Methodology & Substantive Issues)											
Statistics: Comparative Employment											
Analysis and Comparisons (both Eras)											
First draft completed											
Revisions; literature updates											
Submission of Thesis											

* revised plan, submitted October 2001

The second discipline follows a social science paradigm, again informed by appropriate literature such as that relating to demography, social class, occupational sociology and gender inequalities as well as methodology. I favoured a qualitative approach for both strands, as the nature of the data collection does not lend itself to extensive quantification: for example the sampling of twentieth-century informants is small-scale and, of necessity, non-random, offering little opportunity to present my findings in statistically-reliable format. Similarly, the archival evidence was difficult to categorize, classify and present in a quantifiable form. I therefore considered that in the choice of methods, 'fitness for purpose must be [my] guiding principle' (Cohen *et al.* 2000:1), encouraged by the view that 'qualitative data, usually in the form of words rather than numbers, have always been the staple of some fields in the social sciences, notably anthropology, history, and political science' (Miles and Huberman 1994:1). Random sampling is normally the choice for those researchers working with vast quantities of data, which is not true of my study; nor were the women whom I interviewed necessarily representative of their own generation, insofar as

mortality had not yet claimed them (one is a centenarian) and they were still healthy enough to agree to take part in the study.¹⁷

My telling of their story, and that of the women from the Victorian era, is presented from a constructivist-interpretativist standpoint.¹⁸ The narrative approach I adopted in the search for ‘connections between particular events’ has some correspondence with postmodern feminism. Postmodernism rejects traditional male-dominated social theories such as functionalism or Marxism, and has found favour with feminists as it allows social scientists to ‘interrupt their own discursive spaces, reflect on their modes of production, [and] their power interests’ (Richardson 1991:173). It is a theory which enables women to have their ‘voices’ heard (which was my aim), as it is ‘locally situated, grounded in a woman’s experiences’ (Richardson *ibid.*:176).¹⁹

Although life-history methodology can be subject to the criticism that it may not be representative, it has been suggested that if the researcher identifies potential sources of bias, and takes steps to reduce them, both reliability and validity can be increased (Cohen *et al.* (2000:133). In qualitative studies, terms such as validity and reliability do not represent statistical measures, but it is possible to build in certain safeguards concerning participants’ evidence (see Delamont 1992:158). An informant could be asked to read and approve what has been said, or the researcher might make comparisons with similar studies and secondary sources such as official records, or by interviewing other informants. I have been able to build in some ‘checks’ to support my theoretical stance. For example, where possible triangulation was employed with informants’ evidence; and the size of my sample (twenty-one informants) does enable some comparisons to be made.²⁰ In relation to the archive, I searched for additional evidence concerning historical events by following a ‘situation’ through newspaper articles or official documents, reading the relevant literature, or tracing the progress of an item through subsequent entries in SPEW’s Minutes or correspondence.

The study is not entirely devoid of quantitative evidence, but I have not attempted to claim, for example, that questionnaire results are ‘valid’ and ‘reliable’ in the statistical sense. This is partly because the number of informants for whom I had *only* questionnaire evidence is too small to be statistically significant (five, or 23 per cent; and one questionnaire-returner was also interviewed by telephone) but also because the questions put to informants from different sources were not always presented in an identical format.

Prior to making the decision to omit a third cohort in my research design (for logistical and time reasons – see 2.6) I had administered a pilot questionnaire to twelve women contacted through my links with a local comprehensive school, who either worked there or were mothers of pupils attending that school’s secretarial sixth form during 2000-2001.²¹ I decided later that this questionnaire, in its original form, was not suitable for use with the much older women whom I wished to include as the main source of my twentieth-century evidence, some of whom were to be contacted through the old-girls’ association of the

grammar school I had previously attended. (Throughout this study, the sample constituting this latter group of women will be referred to as KOGAs).²²

My introductory letter to the KOGA women contained a return slip, which asked them to indicate whether they would be prepared to be interviewed, or would prefer to answer a postal questionnaire.²³ As our shared membership of that association was my 'passport' to approaching them, I felt that my questions should appear to relate mainly to their school days. There are certain ethical considerations associated with my use of the word *appear*, which infer a possible 'hidden agenda': these are raised in 2.5 below.

When it was necessary to rely on written answers from informants, I adapted my questions to suit the circumstances, for example in providing the prompts for one woman who later sent me a tape-recording giving a fuller response to my questions than our initial meeting had been able to cover;²⁴ or when drawing up a second, supplementary, set of questions for another correspondent.²⁵

I would have preferred face-to-face interviews for the whole sample, but that was not possible. Two interviews were conducted over the telephone, and here I was aware of some disadvantages compared with those conducted in the informants' homes (see further comment below). Telephone interviews have both strengths and weaknesses, and 'their use should be governed by the criterion of fitness-for-purpose' (Cohen *et al.* 2000:124). The purpose, for me, was to build on an introductory postal questionnaire, in order to be able to close any 'gaps' which might be present compared with the personal interviews. The weaknesses of telephone interviews lie in the inability of the questioner to build up the same level of trust, or a personal rapport as in face-to-face contacts, which could produce a much richer source of information, similar to that which can result from a 'social' occasion.

I also made extensive use of secondary data in an effort to place the twentieth-century women's oral histories within the context of their era. My use of the terms 'oral history' or 'life history' has been borrowed from social historians in describing the process of extracting information about the informants' early lives. 'Life history requires a historical, cultural, political, and social situatedness' (Hatch and Wisniewski 1995:117), and even though my enquiries centred on just a small part of the women's lives, for example their education and its connection with their early working lives, the term is appropriate, as it can represent 'any retrospective account by the individual of [her] life in whole or in part, in written or oral form, that has been elicited or prompted by another person' (Hatch and Wisniewski 1995:125, citing Watson and Watson-Franke 1985:2). The description is helpful as it provides the closest approximation to my mixed-genre methodology: it 'range[s] over a wide range of topics ... [and] draw(s) on another person's questions' in gathering information about the informants (Reinharz 1992:130).

2.3 The Research Stages

There were a number of stages through which the research proceeded before any analysis or interpretation of the data could take place. These are summarised as follows:

- Familiarisation with archival material made available for the purpose but which could be consulted only within the confines of Girton College library
- Identification of a target group of potential informants²⁶
- Contacting informants
- Setting up and conducting interviews and other means of data collection from available informants, recording and then transcribing the material
- Embarking upon, and continuing with, an extensive reading programme which would cover historical, sociological, methodological, economic and statistical data as well as nineteenth-century feminism
- Extracting the relevant information from the SPEW archive and transferring it into a format which would be accessible throughout the period of research, when I was away from the Girton library
- The acquisition of appropriate statistical and illustrative material for example in relation to demography, economic data such as wages, and technological innovations
- Contact with archivists in a number of organisations whose records might have a bearing on my enquiries (eg the Royal Society of Arts; private secretarial colleges; newspapers; City Livery Companies)

A theoretical framework was formulated from the evidence obtained from each of these sources. The archival data offers evidence of SPEW Committee members' feminism, even if that term was not in their vocabulary during the nineteenth century, but their interests evolved from a focus specifically on employment issues into much broader political-economic activities.²⁷

The interpretative paradigm which I have adopted emphasises 'the importance of settings, of individual perceptions, of attitudes ... by using non-contrived ... forms of ... data [such as] ... documents ...' (Cohen *et al.* 2000:131). The oral histories of the twentieth-century sample also contribute to a constructivist, interpretativist model.

The programmes of data collection within each strand are summarised below:

2.3.1 The Archive After an introductory visit in December 2000, my working sessions at the Girton archive began in January 2001 and continued at intervals until the archive closed in April 2003. In all twenty-seven days were spent there. Library time was used in reading the files and making notes on relevant contents; copying (using a laptop computer) any letters or other documents of interest to me; obtaining photocopies of some materials; and transcribing (again using the laptop) as many entries as possible from Minute books.²⁸

I was fortunate in being given copies of computer diskettes, at a fairly early stage in the period of study, containing transcriptions of much of the contents of SPEW's Minute books from 1859 to 1900. These had been made by a visiting Australian researcher, Dr Ellen Jordan, the author of an article outlining the way in which the Society had contributed to the opening of pharmaceutical careers to women (see Jordan 1998).²⁹ These diskettes meant that I was able to continue to familiarise myself with additional material even when away from the library.³⁰ My additional transcriptions of a representative selection of Minutes and correspondence extend coverage of the Society's documentation up to the 1950s.

Some of the archival documents are in poor condition, especially the earliest ones: flimsy paper with faded handwriting, or correspondence where the writer has followed the common early-Victorian practice of cross-writing, or continuing a letter in all the margins (see Illustration 2.1. Appendix 9 contains a transcript of these letters). Very few of the contents of SPEW's Early History file were deposited in chronological order, hence it took two or three visits before I came across information which gave an accurate account of the way the Society was launched.

Many of the documents in that file are undated; but as I became more familiar with the entire archive, I was able to ascertain the chronology, and even the authorship. As archival evidence was acquired from SPEW's Minute books (including that provided by Dr. Jordan – see EN.29) separate files were built up, concentrating particularly on branches of clerical work such as book-keeping, the Civil Service, shorthand and typewriting. I took an idiographic approach to the archive, compiling profiles of individuals in whom I developed a particular interest, such as the Society's founder, Jessie Boucherett, some of the individual grantees, and its longest-serving Secretary, Gertrude King.³¹ As time went on, I revisited files which I had consulted in the early stages: many documents assumed a new significance once I knew more about the individuals they concerned, or when I wished to follow a new line of thought. One example concerns the struggle of women to become Civil Service clerks (see Chapter 5, 5.5.6). After learning from memoranda in the Post Office Savings Bank's archives that the Bank's Controller, Mr Thomson, refused to employ women, I searched SPEW's Minutes for the relevant period, and found confirmatory evidence that the Society can indeed be credited with women's eventual acceptance into these posts (for example see Chapter 4, 4.3 for information regarding Miss King's evidence to the 1874 Civil Service Commission).

In attempts to triangulate certain data (or as Richardson puts it, 'crystallize'³²) I consulted official statistics as well as making extensive use of other libraries (the British and the Women's Libraries in London, the Bodleian in Oxford and the inter-library loan system through my own University). I was thus able to access related historical documents or publications written by some of SPEW's founder members, rather than rely entirely on SPEW's archive (for example Smith 1857; Jameson 1857; Boucherett 1860 *ff.*; Parkes 1860 *ff.*; Stanley 1890; Blackburn 1902).

During the three-year period of research, whenever possible I attended meetings held quarterly in London by the present SPTW Committee, in order to keep members informed, as requested, about the contents of the archives and the progress of my studies, as well as to keep abreast of the Society's current activities.

2.3.2 The Twentieth-Century Sample The data collection for the twentieth-century enquiries was conducted concurrently with the archival researches, mainly during the first year of my programme. This was accompanied by appropriate background reading (a process which continued to the end of the study period): on methodology (for example Anderson and Jack 1991; Fowler 1993; Miles and Huberman 1994; Riessman 1993, 1994; Cohen *et al.* 2000; Huberman and Miles 2002); the gender division and deskilling of labour, and gender and social stratification (for example Holland 1980; Crompton and Jones 1984; Crompton and Mann 1986; Crompton and Sanderson 1990; Crompton 1993, 1997); and that related to clerical and secretarial work (Craig 1955; Lockwood 1958 and 1989; Benét 1972; Anderson 1976, 1988; McNally 1979; Cherrington 1982; West 1982; Cohn 1985; Davy 1986; Sanderson 1986; Pringle 1989).

Identifying and contacting potential informants occupied the first four or five months of my programme, eventually resulting in twenty-one women agreeing to take part. I took a number of steps to find my sample, including an unsuccessful attempt to have an item about my search for informants printed in two monthly journals: *Saga Magazine*, and *The Lady*.³³ I chose the first publication as I was aware that their readership was, on the whole, made up of older members of the population, and many of their articles or letter pages focused on 'days gone by'. The second magazine was selected as it had previously run an item outlining the advent of the typewriter into Victorian offices, an article which included an engraving depicting 'a typing pool' sited at the offices of SPEW in 1889 (Ridings 2000:46-7). Unfortunately, neither magazine was prepared to print my request, unless I placed a personal advertisement, at a cost which I found prohibitive. The informants were therefore recruited by the following means:

1. Through a letter printed by a local newspaper

In March 2001, after the above unsuccessful attempts to reach a potential sample, I contacted the editor of my local weekly newspaper in Reading for help. I did not receive a reply, but later discovered that the editor had printed a summary of my request on the correspondence pages.³⁴ As a result, in April 2001, I received letters or phone calls from five women who live in the area. After telephoning them to make appointments, I interviewed all of them, but only three are included in the present sample as two were born after 1930.

2. From the old scholars' association of the school I had attended

As a member of the old-girls' association of my grammar school, I have access to a database of other members, listed under the years in which they left school. I selected the names of eighteen of those whose leaving dates could have placed them in the employment market prior to the

Second World War. In July 2001 I wrote to them, explaining my interest and enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope for the reply slip.³⁵ I did not select women whose addresses indicated that they lived a considerable distance from my own area.³⁶ Fourteen women replied, seven of whom are included in this study. Five of the remaining seven had not worked in offices: three had trained as teachers on leaving school; one worked for her parents in their public house; one trained as a dental nurse. I was informed that a sixth, who had been a Civil Servant, was too ill to reply. The seventh offered to complete a questionnaire rather than be interviewed, but then failed to return it. Four of the original eighteen did not respond to my letter. A return rate of 77 per cent as achieved here is considered to be a good response for postal surveys.³⁷ (See Appendix 8, and Appendices 8a and 8b for follow-up questionnaire and covering letter.)

3. 'Snowballing'

The 'snowball effect' resulted in two others volunteering to take part in the survey – acquaintances of some of those women responding to my letter in the local paper.

4. Via the Warden of a sheltered housing complex

I contacted the Warden of a nearby sheltered housing complex who kindly agreed to ask her residents if any had been office workers and would then consent to be interviewed. Three women volunteered, and their 'oral histories' form part of this study.

5. Additional sources

Six other informants are included, recruited from a variety of sources. These include the mothers of two of my personal friends (one of whom is a centenarian who, although she had not joined KOGA, had nevertheless been a pupil at the same school); the mothers of two women who had been included in the third (unreported) cohort; and two women introduced to me by a member of SPTW's present Committee, whom I travelled to Somerset to interview.³⁸

I had also made an attempt, in March 2001, to contact potential informants through the parent-teacher association of a large London comprehensive school, hoping in that way to include evidence from a town other than Reading. Eventually, in May that year, my efforts were rewarded with only one volunteer, and although I subsequently interviewed this woman, her evidence is not included as she was born after 1950. Table 2.2 summarises the 'recruiting' process.

Not all of the twenty-one women in the cohort agreed to be interviewed. Seven women preferred to respond via a written questionnaire although two of these were also prepared to talk to me on the telephone; and one offered to make a tape-recording as our initial discussion had been in her daughter's presence. Fourteen face-to-face meetings took place, thirteen of those lasting between two and three hours (the fourteenth was

TABLE 2.2

Summary of Sources for 20th Century Informants

<i>Sources</i>	<i>No. contacted</i>	<i>No. of replies</i>	<i>No. included</i>
Magazines	2	0	0
Newspaper	1	5	3
Database of Ex-Scholars	18	14	7
Snowball Effect	n/a	n/a	2
Sheltered Housing	<i>n</i>	3	3
Personal Contacts	4	4	4
Local school	12	12*	2 [†]
A London school	<i>n</i>	1*	0
	—	—	—
	37+ <i>n</i>	39 + <i>n</i>	21

* The asterisk indicates that these totals include younger women, subsequently excluded from this study

† These were the mothers of two of the 'excluded' younger women

TABLE 2.3

Breakdown of Data Collection from 20th Century Sample

<i>Mode of Contact</i>	<i>Number. of Women</i>	<i>Code</i>
Personal Interview	13	Mrs AA, Miss CC, Mrs DD, Mrs EE, Mrs HH, Mrs II, Mrs JJ, Miss KK, Mrs LL, Mrs NN, Mrs OO, Mrs PP, Miss QQ
Questionnaire only	5	Mrs MM, Mrs RR, Mrs SS, Miss TT, Mrs UU
Questionnaire and telephone interview	1	Mrs BB
Questionnaire, telephone and additional correspondence	1	Mrs GG
Discussion, questionnaire and recorded tape	1	Mrs FF
Questionnaire (not returned)	1	(Mrs VV)

half an hour, later supplemented by the above-mentioned tape: see Table 2.3). Reasons for refusing interviews were invariably associated with the informant's state of health, for example severe deafness. This period of data collection spanned many months. The first interview took place on 23 April 2001, the last at the end of September the same year. Written responses sometimes took a long time to be returned: the last one was received in January 2002, the informant having been sent my questionnaire the previous July. (I had not contacted her with a reminder.)

All of the informants were assured of confidentiality and the anonymity which would be built into the report. Actual names have been replaced by alphabetic codes but geographical place-names are used where relevant. As my home base is Reading, and my connections with Cheltenham and Cambridge would not be disguised, it seemed unnecessary to substitute pseudonyms for the names of other towns or cities. Two women expressed an interest in reading the completed study in due course, and I do not have any reservations about the ways in which I have presented their evidence, should they still wish to do so.

2.3.3 Acquiring Evidence As I had rejected a wholly-quantitative method for my research, which would have necessitated a more scientifically-prepared administration of questionnaires, the choice for the sociological aspects of my study was qualitative. Conducting interviews, the most widely-used method for my preferred collection of data, was the obvious choice, since when faced with something one wishes to know about, 'the quickest, most instinctive method is to ask a question' (Fielding 1993:135). The next decision was regarding which type of interview would be suitable: structured or unstructured. Unstructured interviews, the method I favoured, are valuable strategies for discovery, allowing the researcher to seek 'to discover the informant's experience of a particular topic or situation' and can be used to determine what kinds of things are happening rather than to determine 'the frequency of preconceived kinds of things' that the researcher already believes can happen (Lofland and Lofland 1984:12). They are more flexible than fully structured schedules, where the 'format and sequence of words and questions' are the same for each respondent (Cohen *et al.* 2000:121). However, in order to achieve a measure of uniformity, I prepared a core of questions - a semi-standardised (semi-structured) framework - which would, at some stage during the discussions, be put to each of the informants in broadly similar ways, if not always in the same order. This choice left me 'free to alter the sequence [of the questions] and to probe for more information' (Gilbert 1993:135).

The opening stages of each interview, therefore, did not always follow exactly the same pattern, although I invariably started off by reiterating what my research was about, and what sort of questions I would like to put. I sought permission to use a small cassette recorder, as I was aware of the difficulties associated with attempting to keep extensive written notes whilst conducting a conversation. I did carry a typed list of my 'key' questions, and held a notepad and pen, more because such tools 'signal' one's rôle as interviewer but also as an *aide memoire* to guard against the fear that during enthusiastic exchanges I might forget to cover

some important point. The notepad was used to record some figures, such as dates of birth, or the amount received as first wages, as I intended to include such details when summarising each informant's profile (see Chapter 6, Table 6.6). The list was also helpful when a pause occurred in our exchanges, or as a means of signalling the approach of the end of an interview, such as with the comment 'Let me just check whether I've covered all my points, before I leave you.' One woman had told me during our initial telephone conversation that she 'didn't like' tape recorders, but on the day she agreed to its use. I also ensured that all informants knew that I would switch off the machine at any time, if requested to do so. In fact, I sometimes did switch it off (although I was never asked to do so) whenever the exchanges strayed into potentially intimate topic areas.

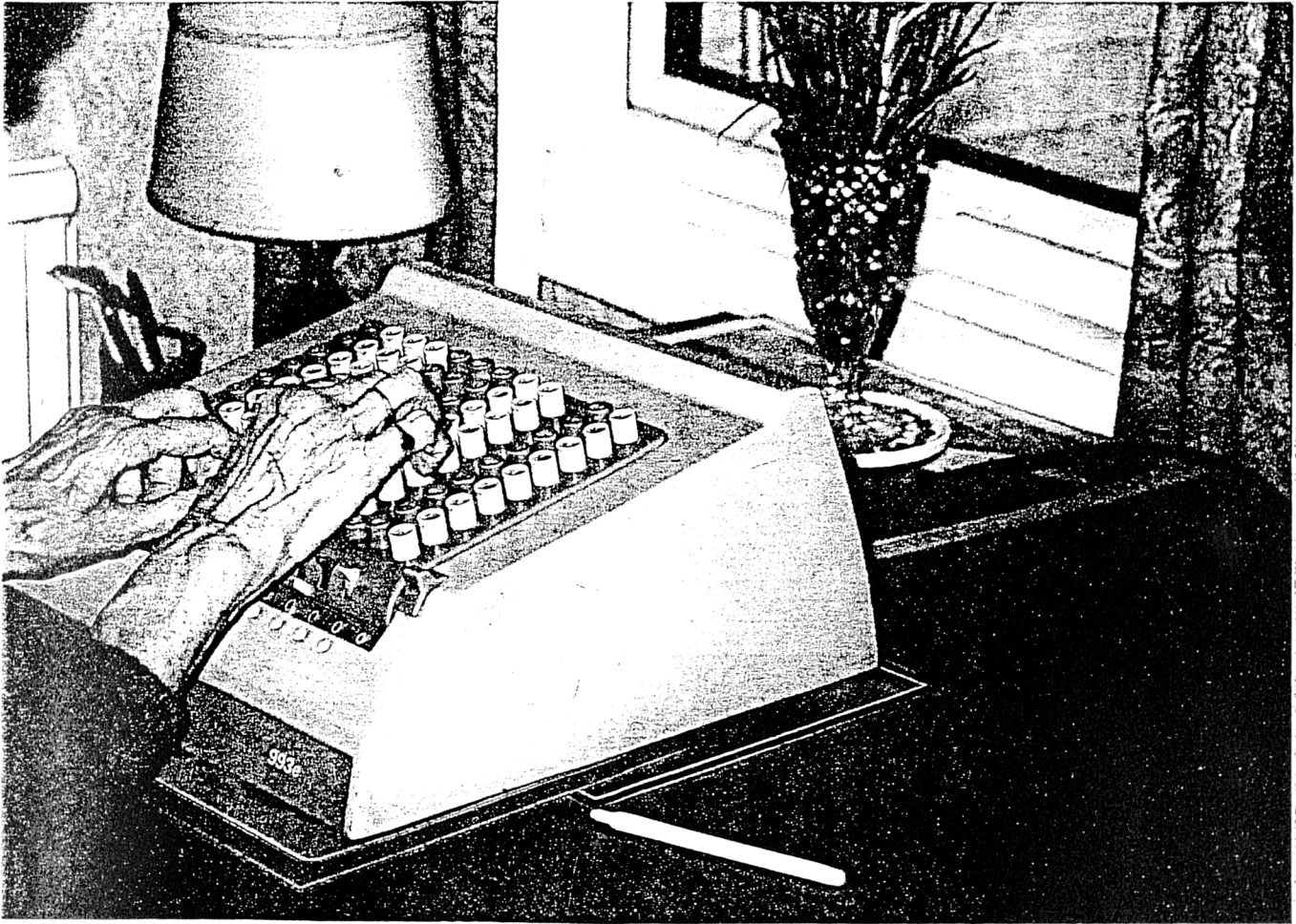
The recordings were later transcribed verbatim – a process which is time-consuming but very helpful for analysis. It was also essential to prepare transcripts as soon as possible after an interview as eventually I found it necessary to re-use some of the cassettes with other informants.³⁹ In general, 'it can take a day's typing by a competent typist to transcribe a one-hour interview' (Fielding 1993:147), and Delamont also notes that one hour of tape recording takes six hours to transcribe (Delamont 1992:158); but I am fortunate in being able to operate a keyboard at high speed, so transcriptions took about half an 'average' time. Nevertheless, as each interview frequently resulted in around five thousand words, I invested well over ninety hours in typing them up.

In addition to thirteen full-length face-to-face interviews, I had data from another seven women. Some of this was in the form of letters as well as written responses to my questionnaires. Other evidence was offered during telephone conversations (including those which were initiated for the purpose of setting up an interview) and in these cases I had little choice but to make brief notes as we talked, so it was necessary to type these up immediately afterwards to reduce the risk of inaccuracies.

Many of my informants showed me school photographs, reports, or prizes such as books inscribed by their teachers. Other documentary evidence was offered: a photograph of the office which had been one woman's first place of work, showing a 'Victorian-style' workbench with its high stool and an early telephone switchboard; another sent me postcards of the country estate which had housed her residential secretarial college. I was invited back to one house in order to take photographs of my informant, seated at the comptometer (adding) machine which she had used at work, and which had been given to her when she left (see Illustration 2.2). I also researched the archives of a local employer (Huntley and Palmers) where some of the women in the sample had worked, in order to verify aspects of their recollections.⁴⁰

I rejected the use of computerised coding systems such as NUD.IST or SPSS when analysing my data.⁴¹ Instead, I made some limited attempts to code the evidence from the informants using a mixture of the 'word find' facility in the word processor, and manually highlighting words or phrases on print-outs or

ILLUSTRATION 2.2
Comptometer



This is one of a number of photographs which I took of Miss CC, who was proud to demonstrate the comptometer machine which she had used during her employment, and which was given to her when she left.

The machines are operated by electricity; they are quite noisy, and very heavy.

letters from informants. This exercise was only partially useful, as it did not result in enough quantifiable evidence to include as a table. It was helpful insofar as it enabled me to confirm impressions, such as the frequency with which certain syntactical expressions occurred (eg conform; willing; grateful; strict; clever; fun; 'know your place'; 'you didn't argue'), indicating the degree to which this cohort viewed their lives from a similar perspective to each other. No remarks were made by any individual which contradicted other informants' evidence – rather, they reinforced comments others had made.

2.4 Reflections on the Methodology

As has been mentioned, the mixed-genre nature of my enquiries did not lend itself to a completely quantitative study, although some data analysis was employed. The largely-qualitative strategy which I did employ has provided answers to my research questions: however, given an opportunity to start again, of course I would do many things differently, in accessing both the archive's contents and the oral histories of the informants. I am now more aware of potential problems arising from interviewer-bias as well as on the part of interviewees. Cohen and his associates warn that both parties in an interview can be 'prone to subjectivity and bias' (Cohen *et al.* 2000:269), but suggest that such risks can be recognised and controlled. My own background - as 'old girl' of a local school attended by many of my informants, as well as one-time office worker - meant that I embarked on the interview process with some preconceptions. For example I held opinions regarding teachers' attitudes towards certain school-leaving destinations and the concomitant 'invisibility' of pupils who were not likely to be considered academic enough for University entrance; also that many women who embarked on clerical careers were intellectually capable of greater challenges than such work offered.

Some possible bias could have been introduced during discussions with KOGA informants, on the evidence of tape recordings and my memory of the 'tone' of personal exchanges. My own facial expressions, body language and nonlexicals might have signalled agreement with, or recognition of, comments by informants – and such empathy or rapport would have been likely to encourage an interviewee to enlarge on a comment. There were also times when some women (not exclusively KOGA informants) indicated an attitude which could be said to be biased: regarding the social acceptability – even the 'respectability' - of working for certain local firms, for example (see Chapter 6).

I am also aware that the methods by which my sample was selected could produce bias, as the women were extracted from a very limited geographical area, and were largely self-selected or simply 'available'. I do not make any claims that my findings are transferable to the whole population, but it is possible to present a generalised theory concerning one group of women, from one particular geographical location, at one point in time, which nevertheless offers a snapshot of an era, which might well be representative of many other women's experiences.

Further reflections on specific aspects of my methodology relating to each strand of the research process are considered separately below:

2.4.1 The Archive I am confident that the quantity, and the quality, of the data which I acquired through my study of the archives has provided me with an extensive knowledge and understanding of SPEW/SPTW's achievements, as well as evidence of the ways in which many of its members forged feminist identities. Their achievements – and some of the Society's 'false starts' – are set out in Chapter 4. My reflections regarding its impact are included in Chapter 7.

I have been able to verify the course of events leading to the founding of the Society, establishing the pivotal rôle of Jessie Boucherett. This is a cause of considerable satisfaction to me, as several published sources had misrepresented SPEW's origins (see Chapter 3, 3.5.2). Not least, the archive provided evidence that this small but effective Society was responsible for a number of 'firsts' in launching women into various branches of white-collar employment. Much of this information was not previously in the public domain (see Chapters 4 and 5).

There are, nevertheless, a number of improvements which I could have made regarding the acquisition of archival data. I might have used library-time more efficiently, by taking a more methodical approach to document searches in the early days, paying less attention to distractions or 'blind alleys'. Jordanova warns against allowing the excitement of archival enquiry to prejudice one's critical faculties: 'if so much rests on the sources, we shift responsibility away from historians and towards their materials' (Jordanova 2000:189). One example from my experience concerned the circumstances surrounding a particular *in memoriam* fund – a digression which subsequently contributed little to my thesis.⁴² Such indulgences would not normally be crucial, but the announcement of Girton's closure of the archive and the consequent inaccessibility of any more of SPEW's documents came as an unpleasant surprise, as the effect was to foreshorten my remaining access time, which I had believed would be open-ended (see 2.2).

The physical conditions at the archive were factors which I had to take into account in my use of the documents. The small room in which they were housed was often occupied by other researchers, and as a maximum of three could be accommodated, visits had to be booked in advance, and an indication given to the archivist prior to my arrival regarding which files I wished to consult on that occasion. I fully appreciate that such forward planning was a necessary strategy to enable the archivist to make the most effective use of her well-ordered but overcrowded environment, yet these perceived restrictions did curtail additional 'evidence-trails' during particular visits.⁴³

2.4.2 The Informants It has been suggested that a research interview is ‘a two-person conversation initiated by the interviewer for the specific purpose of obtaining research-relevant information, and focused by him [*sic*] on content specified by research objectives of systematic description, prediction, or explanation’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000:269, citing Cannell and Kahn, 1968:527). My intention was to find out how my informants’ circumstances and their job experiences differed from those of the pioneering Victorian office workers – and the way to find out was to ask questions. Most of my interviews would be with women I had not met previously, so I hoped that by establishing an appropriate rapport, and by putting my questions in an acceptable manner, I would obtain accurate and relevant data.

The process of meeting, interviewing or otherwise communicating with the women who have contributed evidence for this study was very rewarding. They represent a generation whose experiences, in many respects, are similar to my own, yet which have sufficient differences to make the process of investigation interesting and worthwhile. I am confident that my intrusion into their world was not unsettling for them: many remarked how much they had enjoyed the opportunity to talk about their past experiences to someone who had had a similar start in life. Thus, the interview occasions could be categorised as ‘social, interpersonal encounter[s], not merely a data collection exercise’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000:279). Nevertheless, as was the case with the archival research, there are aspects upon which I would hope to improve regarding my investigative strategy, were I to start the process again, for example regarding my preparations for the interviews.

I was anxious to start the interview schedule as quickly as possible after receiving positive responses to my initial approaches, partly because I felt that I should ‘strike whilst the iron was hot’, but also because I was impatient to begin collecting evidence. I now recognise that I did not have a sufficiently clear understanding of the statistical implications of using slightly different questionnaires or interview frameworks for different sub-sets, which negated the opportunity to quantify my findings. A properly-constructed pilot phase would have avoided some of these problems. However, I believe that I have been able to extract sufficient information, using my adopted methods, to enable me to generalise about the collective experiences of the whole sample.

After reviewing the transcriptions I formed the opinion that I had spent a disproportionate amount of time, during interviews, talking to KOGA informants about their *school*, rather than their *schooling*, and its relationship to their work experiences – behaviour which could have compromised the quality of my evidence base. Perhaps, too, I could have spent more time during all the interviews exploring the extent to which the women’s attitudes towards their ‘housewife’ rôles might have changed over time: what prompted two of the informants (and a third from the ‘younger’ cohort), for example, to embark on degree courses as ‘mature students’ and then train as teachers? Did this decision have any effect on their relationships with their husbands? Re-interviewing some of the women would have been the way to counteract any

deficiencies, but I rejected that strategy because of the time restrictions within which I operated. Initially I felt that there were too few 'new' areas to be explored with the informants to justify contacting them again a year or eighteen months after the first interview: I had not, after all, set out to obtain *whole-life* histories, but at the end of the period of study I regretted these lost opportunities (see 2.6).

Some other issues relating to reliability of evidence obtained from interviewing need to be addressed. I was aware that accuracy of recollection is a potential problem facing the researcher. How could I be confident of the 'truth' of the information being reported to me? Indeed, is it possible to regard people's memories of 'past events, beliefs or emotions ... as valid or reliable historical data'? (Gittins 1979:84) I took a positive view of this risk, believing that what is considered worthy of recall is, in itself, of more significance than that which has been 'forgotten' or 'misremembered'. However, I received a telephone call from one interviewee, offering additional information about one of her jobs which she had '*now remembered*', and she expressed amazement that she had '*forgotten*' to tell me about it at the time (Mrs EE, b.1923). As the job to which she referred had been held much later in her working life than the period which I had been questioning her about, this was perhaps unsurprising; moreover, it had no effect on my findings, but it does raise the question as to whether a subsequently-remembered item is less 'valid or reliable' than the original testimony. Not all researchers, however, remain in contact with their informants at the end of the fieldwork – a privilege from which I have benefited.

My view is that as one memory often triggers another such added recollections do not invalidate the evidence offered to the researcher, even if that recollection is not instantaneous. To guard against possible errors in recall, where accuracy is important to the researcher, and especially if the interview is a one-off, an interviewer can ask supplementary questions, or return to a topic at a later stage in the interview (or in my case, subsequently). Many authorities counsel the use of '*between method triangulation*' (Delamont 1992:159 [*italics as original*]) – a means of getting data on something with more than one method, such as the use of group (focus) interviews, census data and other documents. Although I did not make a *systematic* use of any of these additional methods, during most interviews I was able to return to a specific topic, date or fact, and pose a supplementary question in order to check what might have been either a false memory, an inaccurate time scale, or where I was unsure of an informant's meaning. An example of checking dates concerned the age at which one informant left school, *viz.*

early in the interview:

Q. When did you go to work there? How old were you?

She answers hesitatingly:

A. 15 or 16 ... *No, wait a minute. I left school in 1935 and matriculated and then I had to get a job. First of all two or three of us went to the Post Office for an interview. Somebody called Darcy ... got the job! And then this job at ... but I didn't stay long ...*

About twenty minutes later, I return to the question of her age:

Q. What year did you leave school?

She answers promptly:

A. 1935. *I was born in 1919, so I was 16. Actually I was only 15½ because my birthday was in the September and I left before the end of the summer term - the 19th of the 9th 1919!* (Extract from interview with Mrs LL)

The KOGA database to which I referred earlier was not infallible either: I found during an interview with Mrs GG (b.1921) that her school-leaving date had been incorrectly listed as 1939, whereas she established during our discussions that she had left in 1937 (see Chapter 6, Table 6.6).

Some limited triangulation validation was also possible as a result of my prior knowledge of the history of education, for example the authenticity of informants' memories on such matters as scholarships, or contents of the school curriculum. One woman's inability to remember any boys at her (mixed-sex) school was understandable, given the practice at the time of separating the sexes for some subjects – even to the extent of recording single-sex groups in the end-of-year official school photograph (I was given a copy of one such for 1933). Having been asked whether her school provided separate activities for boys and girls, she gradually realised that all her own memories involved girls, remarking thoughtfully: '*I don't ever remember sitting next to a boy. I can't remember the boys!*' (Mrs AA, b.1921)

Reflecting on the quality of the data which I obtained from the women who supplied information during telephone conversations, I am aware that not only were my questions framed differently from those put during face-to-face interviews, but the interview was carried out at a brisker pace. There seemed to be a greater pressure to keep the conversational flow going, so the question-answer interaction was more structured than during face-to-face meetings. The more relaxed atmosphere of informants' homes offered the opportunity to extend conversations, allow for 'thinking time', and include encouraging glances or nonlexicals followed by an expectant silence, in order to encourage the expansion of an answer. Such exchanges were frequently helped along by intervals for tea and biscuits or, as on one memorable occasion, a glass of sherry. Telephone calls, on the other hand, are likely to be much shorter than personal interviews: the longest which I held lasted about forty minutes, compared with the minimum of two hours of personal interviews.

Other drawbacks were associated with the quality of evidence from written answers. These were dependent upon an informant having the time, energy and will to respond at length. I had set out my questions on a single sheet, but had enclosed a supply of A4 paper for the women's replies. This was because it is difficult to gauge the appropriate space to leave for answers – and there is also the risk that a respondent will stop writing once a space is filled. I was dissatisfied with this method as I do not think I took sufficient account

of the difficulties some women could experience in writing what amounted to short ‘essays’ in answer to my questions. The majority of the women in the sample are aged over eighty, and many find the physical process of hand-writing can be uncomfortable or very tiring (as already mentioned, one woman took over six months to return my questionnaire).⁴⁴

A further factor contributing to my dissatisfaction with the questions which I had drawn up, whether posed during interviews, or sent as a written questionnaire, is associated with my ‘hidden agenda’. This is an issue to which I return below (see 2.5) as a purpose other than that made explicit could be construed as unethical. My additional hopes were that I would be able to categorize the social class origins of informants’ families, and to uncover attitudes to the issues of gender relations, or their feelings about ‘woman’s place’: yet I was reluctant to frame written questions in overtly feminist or social class terms, believing that many women in this older age-group might resent them. Consequently, of thirteen ‘probing’ questions, eight of those administered to KOGA informants were deliberately linked to our ‘shared’ school experiences, and four related to working lives (see Appendix 8b).

The questions put to non-KOGA respondents followed more closely the piloted version (Appendix 7a) but the accompanying covering letter (Appendix 7) made no mention of the link with the Cambridge archive as had that sent to the KOGA group (see 2.5 and Appendix 8). I expected that follow-up interviews would provide me with the additional information which I hoped to acquire. Not all of the postal contacts were sterile, however, as I received a considerable amount of information during an extended exchange of correspondence with one informant.

The transcription of taped interviews raises other issues. Riessman has suggested that probes, which may be consciously adopted by qualitative researchers, should be represented in such transcriptions, since they are an important means of ‘capturing the rhythm’ of a text (Riessman 1993:12). Clearly, neither the transcript of a telephone conversation nor pages of written responses to a questionnaire can ‘capture the rhythm’ in the same way. Analysing my transcriptions, often many months after the recordings and subsequent transcriptions were made, I found that the inclusion of ‘notes to myself’ about an informant’s tone of voice, meaningful glance, or facial grimace added greatly to my confidence in putting a different interpretation on a comment from the one which the actual words indicated. For example, an implication of underlying snobbery can be betrayed in a tone of voice, even a facial expression, thereby altering the message sent out by the words alone. In order to represent such nuances, a transcriber must find a way of emphasising the printed word, or alternatively adding a description of the speaker’s perceived meaning. The following extract illustrates how I recorded one such example:

Q. Did you know anyone who did work there?
A. *No, no I didn't.*

[*My note, added during transcription, says: Response given in a tone of voice implying that 'they' would have moved in entirely different circles!*]

At the close of the research process, I now consider that the questionnaires which were designed for postal use were unsatisfactory, and it is perhaps fortunate that I had to rely solely on this source with only eight of the twenty-one informants, three of whom supplemented their responses with additional contact (see Table 2.3). As some of the women represented the KOGA group, two different sets of questions were sent out. One list (Appendix 8b) was sent to four KOGA informants, and another (Appendix 7a) to the other four women. I now recognise that many of the questions are too complex – my aim had been to guide the informant towards the kind of information I sought – but it would have been better to present separate, shorter questions, even at the expense of increasing the length of the questionnaire. Shortly after receiving responses to these questionnaires, I summarised in my research diary what I had hoped to achieve by asking each question. These memoranda are included as Appendix 7b.

2.5 Ethical Considerations

As has been suggested, certain decisions which I made regarding the use of my data, both archival and individual women's histories, were taken as a result of ethical considerations. For example, the documents sited at Girton cover SPEW's business from its founding in 1859 up to the 1980s. Many of those documents refer to sums of money advanced in loans to women or contain references to the circumstances which led to their needing a loan and I wished to avoid the risk of uncovering intimate details regarding women who could be living. I therefore refrained from consulting any of the financial files beyond the 1950s, or any of the Minutes which might possibly have covered the years when current SPTW members were serving on committees. I have also blanked out any names on files which record 'bad debts' in the Girton listings (Appendix 1).

However, with regard to the twentieth-century cohort, different ethical considerations arose. My letter to KOGA women said that my purpose in contacting them was to enquire into their experiences of office work: but I had introduced myself through our shared membership of the old scholars' association (Appendix 8). In this way, I expected to allay any fears which some elderly women might harbour, regarding an unsolicited approach from a stranger. The letter also made mention of the Cambridge location of the archives which I now acknowledge as a partly-subconscious attempt to provide a *bona fide* setting appealing to the 'collegiate' – or perhaps intellectual élite - aspects of KOGA membership.

At the next stage (the interview), I included a number of questions about school days, in order to build on an interest which is implied by our shared (and continuing) membership of KOGA. It is only at this reflective stage that I have recognised that such ploys could be open to the charge of being unethical. By contrast, the letter sent at the pilot stage to those younger women who had originally volunteered to take

part in the survey (but who were later omitted from the study) had made no mention of the archives, nor at that time did it draw attention to my interest in their schooling (*cf.* Appendix 7).

Other potentially sensitive issues arose during interviews, relating to the personal nature of some informants' disclosures. As I was very conscious of the 'excuse' which had brought me into their homes in the first place, I felt I should not encourage my informants to expand on certain topics, and I always switched off the tape recorder as soon as I realised that the conversation had moved into intimate areas. I also controlled my instinctive empathetic response, recognising that I was not in their homes in a counselling capacity; but aware nevertheless that for many people, the opportunity to share 'past secrets' with a comparative stranger could be therapeutic. Many of the women live alone, and some are quite obviously lonely. As my questions about their pasts may well have triggered some uncomfortable memories in the first place, I felt that I should allow a woman to say what she wished, but refrained from asking further questions in order not to encourage her to divulge too many details. Glucksmann, who interviewed many Manchester women about the impact on their domestic division of labour of their full-time employment, has related her experiences of interviewing a similar age-group. She wrote:

Often I gave up on what I had actually come for. On the other hand many of the women were lonely and wanted company and then it could be awkward to leave, even after staying to chat for some time, and this often induced guilt feelings about 'using' them. Some people said the best things after the tape recorder had been switched off (Glucksmann 1994:162-3).⁴⁵

In a face-to-face interview, once a subject has been introduced, researchers are in a difficult position, faced with a choice of deliberately 'cutting off' further disclosures, or by non-verbal prompts such as an expectant silence or enquiring looks allowing the speaker to continue. This situation does not arise with written questionnaires, nor to some extent in telephone interviews. A correspondent may choose to mention a topic, but not expand on it, as was illustrated by an example from one of my informants. Having written that her husband's '*illness from the War service affected our lives*' this woman then wrote in the margin, alongside this comment, 'NO MORE on this' (Mrs GG, b.1921). The ethical question is raised as to whether, during a conversation, she would have been tempted to reveal more, which she might later regret; but the fact remains that she was not prepared to divulge further details on paper.

Such episodes reinforce what Anderson and Jack (1991:11) have called 'the dominant and muted channels' of an interview: the researcher needs to listen 'in stereo' – tune in to both channels – in order to understand the relationship between them. On reflection, I believe that what many of my informants were telling me on the 'muted channel' (for example about their relationships with men, or other members of their family) did have a relevance to my research topic, as their attitudes indicated their underlying views of gender relations (the 'good wife and mother' syndrome, perhaps) which could well have had a bearing on some of their

career decisions. Overall, however, I believe that the women had no regrets about their involvement in my research, a view summed up by the comment of one who wrote '*I quite enjoyed thinking over the past*' (Mrs GG b.1921- and this was the same woman who had written 'NO MORE') as well as others who encouraged me to contact them again should I wish to do so.

One further aspect of my search for potential informants should be mentioned. Shortly before this research programme commenced, my mother had moved into a flat in the same 'sheltered' block of flats in which three of my informants reside. Although I had never met those women prior to interviewing them, I knew we would be likely to meet on subsequent occasions, when I was visiting my mother. Therefore, when some very 'personal' disclosures were offered during some of these interviews, I was particularly anxious to reassure the speakers that such confidences would always be respected. On the basis of my subsequent contacts with those women, I feel sure that they continue to trust me to keep that promise.

2.6 False Starts and Limitations

As mentioned above, I had begun the research process by intending to include surveys of two twentieth-century age groups. It became clear to me that if the focus of my research was to be a comparison between the pioneers of clerical work and the legacy built on their efforts by another generation, then the inclusion of a third generation would not only contribute little to such a comparison but would entail a major additional enquiry which would need to address issues such as the advance of technology, changes in educational and employment laws, and a completely different socio-economic climate (that of the 'affluent Fifties' and the emergence of the concept of the 'teenager'). After a few months, therefore, the third cohort was excluded from my final research proposal, which was submitted in October 2001.

Before deciding on that step I had already identified and contacted a number of women in the younger group, administered the pilot questionnaire to twelve and interviewed three of them. After the decision was taken not to include them in this study, I wrote to those who had not been interviewed, thanking them for their help and explaining that at least for the time being I would not be using their evidence (Appendix 12). This 'false start' data might yet provide the basis of a future study (see Chapter 7), as differences between the experiences of those women and the present informants could possibly be more significant than those between nineteenth- and the early twentieth-century women.

Finally, the programme of study was limited to some extent by the geographical circumstances within which my research was conducted. Living in Reading, needing to be in Cambridge to access the archives (and meet with my second supervisor) as well as keeping in touch with my University tutor at Cheltenham meant that considerable amounts of time were spent in travelling: for example, a round trip to Girton College took up to six hours, which meant that I tried to include overnight stays as often as possible, in

order to maximise library time. Journeys to Cheltenham involved about half that travelling time. Whilst no research student would claim that they ever had 'enough' time for everything, nevertheless I think that the hundreds of hours invested in such journeys could have been spent more profitably.

2.7 Outline of the Thesis

In what follows, Part Two (Chapters 3-5) covers the historiographic aspects of my research. Chapter 3 offers a historical overview of nineteenth-century feminism and its relationship to one small Society, focusing in particular on the central rôle of its founder, Jessie Boucherett. Chapter 4 details the rôle of that Society in pioneering clerical occupations; and Chapter 5 examines the divisions of clerical work in which women subsequently found employment, drawing attention to SPEW's rôle in many of those innovations.

In Part Three, Chapter 6 introduces the sample of twentieth-century women whose working experiences illustrate the legacy of the Victorian pioneers, thus enabling a comparison to be made between the economic determinism of the former and the political-economy feminism of the latter. The epistemological approach adopts a social constructivist/ interpretativist paradigm.

In Part Four (Chapter 7) I draw together the two strands of the study, reflect upon the extent to which the research questions have been answered, and suggest some future directions in which further study could be carried out using the archival material as well as empirical studies of additional generations of female clerical workers.

PART TWO

ILLUSTRATION 3.1

JESSIE BOUCHERETT
(undated)



CHAPTER THREE

JESSIE BOUCHERETT, THE LANGHAM PLACE GROUP, AND S.P.E.W.

'Very little is known about her and she remains one of the most elusive of the Langham Place circle. [She was] an unexpected recruit to feminism' (Banks 1985, *Vol.I*: 33)

3.1 Introduction

This chapter offers a brief biography of the early adulthood of Jessie Boucherett, who after meeting 'the ladies of Langham Place' became the founder of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW). Further, it outlines the activities of some of the liberal-feminist-inspired women who formed the Langham Place Group (LPG), many of whom were also involved in SPEW's proceedings.

Caine has argued that the mid-Victorian feminist movement, with its predominantly middle-class orientation, drew many of its ideas from 'liberal economic and political beliefs ... making extensive use ... of a distinctively middle-class ideal of womanhood' (Caine 1997:89). These models of womanhood were acceptable in advanced Unitarian sections of society, but not wholesale. Caine considers that such women set up 'a model of female excellence which combined accepted ideas about women's morality, chastity, and nurturance with an assertion of their intelligence, their independence, and their personal strength' (Caine *ibid.*). The need to maintain the characteristics of middle-class Victorian femininity and respectability had to be balanced against strategies for achieving change. It could be argued that the members of SPEW recognized this, and incorporated it into their activities, since their aims would not seem too threatening if viewed as a form of philanthropy (see for example Chapter 4. 4.5).

In an earlier study, Caine (1992) examined the origins of mid-Victorian feminism by researching the lives of four women. These biographies represented three of Boucherett's contemporaries - Emily Davies (1830-1921), Josephine Butler (1828-1906), Frances Power Cobbe (1822-1904) - and a younger, fourth, associate of Boucherett's, Millicent Garrett Fawcett (1847-1929). All are categorized as 'first-wave' feminists. Caine does not consider it necessary to divide feminists into dichotomous categories, nor to separate them into models of 'equality' and 'difference'. By illustrating how diverse were the formative ideologies of the four, she noted that they were by no means united in their motivations for addressing women's issues, even

though they shared concerns about women's social and moral duties. It was those shared concerns which gave mid-Victorian feminism 'its distinctive character' – a character she considers not manifested by later (twentieth-century) feminists (Caine 1992:15; and see Caine 1997). This writer also pointed out that the social, political and economic changes which occurred in the last few years of the nineteenth century serve to explain why the 'underlying unity' of the mid-Victorian feminists could not last (Caine 1992:241). For example, in the 1970s the so-called 'second-wave' feminists were not drawn predominantly from the middle class, and their objectives involved politically-motivated preoccupations with social class, industrial labour and women's subservience. Whilst women's networking was important to both 'waves', many nineteenth-century feminists (such as Boucherett and Davies) were willing to enlist the aid of influential men in their campaigns.

Not all first-wave feminist enterprises were seen as harmless or of little consequence: for example, if women's employment seemed to threaten that of men, this would alarm conservative opinion. There were many attacks on feminism in the conservative press - a particularly strong one, for example, in the *Saturday Review* (18 July 1857:64-65) on Barbara Leigh Smith (Bodichon)'s treatise *Women and Work* (1857).

'First-wave' feminists campaigned on a variety of women's issues, for example reforms of the laws relating to married women's property, the improvement of secondary education for girls, and the opening up of higher education to women, as well as petitioning for the female suffrage. Nevertheless, many recognised that a careful balance had to be struck between the need to bring such issues into the open, and the overriding imperative to retain middle-class women's 'respectability'. Whilst participating in drawing-room gatherings, addressing small conferences and speaking at larger public meetings, they demonstrated that women were capable of so much more than society expected of them, yet 'always in ways designed to show their own acceptance of Victorian codes of propriety' (Caine 1997:90). Thus, in Caine's view, women such as Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, Bessie Rayner Parkes and Emily Faithfull (see below for further information) had found it necessary to hide the 'unconventional lives and life-styles' which they had 'relished' beneath 'a proper and decorous exterior' to further their educational and political campaigns (Caine *ibid.*:99). Emily Davies (also introduced below) was particularly cautious regarding the need for her pioneering Girton students to maintain women's socially prescribed rôles. She was 'insistent that women students and members of the women's movement generally should refrain from doing anything which would give rise to the suspicion that they were becoming unwomanly or indecorous' (Caine 1992:101).

Thus there was no universal agreement about the means by which feminist aims could be achieved, and inevitably tensions arose between some individual women with regard to the strategies which would be employed. In this chapter I will refer to some of the tensions which eventually led to the dispersal of the Langham Place Group and the folding of its mouthpiece publication, the *English Woman's Journal* (see 3.5.4), and to some resignations from SPEW's committee (see 3.5.3).

The Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (SPEW), whose records this study uses as a main source of information on the origins of women's involvement in clerical employment, was the brainchild of Emilia Jessie Boucherett (1825-1905). Jessie Boucherett was a small, frail-looking woman: two surviving portraits represent her as somewhat self-effacing (see Illustrations 3.1 and 3.2). Her obituary refers to her as 'a delicate, highly-bred looking old lady, with a considerable sense of humour, great courtesy and knowledge of the world' (*The Times* 21.10.1905:8). The youngest child of the wealthy High Sheriff of Lincolnshire, she had been brought up in a carefree, loving home where she was 'her mother's special darling' (*EWR* 15.1.1906:4). The Huguenot ancestors of her Anglican and staunchly-Conservative father, Ayscoghe Boucherett (1791-1857) had been settled in Leicestershire for two hundred years. The family home at the time of Jessie's birth, Willingham Hall (Illustration 3.3), was 'a centre of activity, whose influence went out quietly but reached far' (*EWR* 15.1.1906:6). This phrase is not explained, but on the basis of the additional evidence which I have uncovered, it is possible to speculate that the Boucheretts were particularly conscious of their responsibilities to the wider, as well as to the local, community and that the children were brought up to 'think for themselves', to be 'truly kind and generous' with 'a great knowledge of the world' (*EWR* 15.1.1906:4, 6).⁴⁶

Although Ayscoghe Boucherett and his wife Louisa (née Pigou) had produced three sons, none of them would outlive their sisters. Two of the girls' older brothers died young, one at age 15 and the other at 23; the surviving son Henry Robert was aged 59 when he predeceased his sisters in 1877. Louisa, the eldest daughter, died in 1895, after which Jessie inherited the estate; however, as she was the last Boucherett, following her death on 18 October 1905 the estates passed via the girls' aunts (the Newdigate-Newdegates) to the Barne family.

Jessie and her sister Louisa engaged in a wide range of philanthropic activities, as was usual for women of their class. In the first half of the nineteenth century philanthropy was the only socially acceptable outlet outside the home through which genteel women (married or unmarried) could expend their energies and intelligence. Initially, the sisters' activities were centred upon their own locality: Jessie, for example, supported the Market Rasen Dispensary and Cottage Hospital. Louisa's special interest was in the boarding-out of pauper children.⁴⁷ Louisa also made strenuous attempts to improve the 'general insanitary conditions' of the Lincoln hospital, where two of her friends had died of cholera, as is indicated by a lengthy correspondence on the subject with Florence Nightingale (1820-1910). The latter's help was enlisted in Louisa's quest to change both the physical conditions and the management of that hospital.⁴⁸ It is clear that Jessie also continued to have a close interest in health issues, as in 1867 she subscribed to the fund which created the St Mary's Dispensary in London. This was the medical charity set up by Elizabeth Garrett, later better known as Dr Elizabeth Garrett Anderson (1836-1917) (see Crawford 2002:56). In her later years, she was a shareholder in the East Anglian Sanatorium Company Ltd., established for the

purpose of building a sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis ‘whose architecture would allow for the best possible treatment of the disease’ (Crawford 2002:99 *ff.*). This company was formed to support the pioneering work of Dr Jane Walker, begun in 1892, when she had opened a ‘house sanatorium’ in rented property at Downham Market, Norfolk – ‘in dry East Anglia’ – and a second one at Clare, in Suffolk (Crawford 2002:98). In other words, the Boucherett sisters not only demonstrated a particular interest in community health, but contributed generous sums of money to its advancement.

There is also evidence of the Boucherett family’s philanthropic interest in education. The improvement of *girls’* education was a matter in which Jessie was later passionately interested; but her father’s involvement in education consisted in the patronage of the Caistor Grammar School (for boys), as well as the setting up a village school in nearby Stallingborough, where his family had once had close connections (see EN.46).⁴⁹ The tradition of *noblesse oblige* to the village poor – in this case the provision of a school in the Anglican tradition – meant that Louisa and Jessie Boucherett would have been familiar with the conditions pertaining in such schools. An indication that they did indeed visit the Stallingborough school comes from a local newspaper report:

Through the princely liberality of Ayscoghe Boucherett Esq., of Willingham Hall an excellent school has recently been established. The first anniversary was held on Easter Tuesday, when 181 persons sat down to tea in the school-room, to commemorate the commencement of this noble effort. The parishioners expressed themselves in highly commendatory terms of the above gentleman, for having founded this institution at his own expense, as well as contributed annually a stipend to the master. The thanks of the company were likewise presented to the ladies, for the sumptuous treat which they had gratuitously afforded (Lincoln, Rutland & Stamford Mercury 5.5.1848).

The ‘ladies’ referred to in that newspaper report must surely have been Mrs Boucherett and her two daughters. Louisa at this date was aged 27, and Jessie 23. I have been unable to find any other mentions of the Boucherett women’s activities at this time; however, it is on record that when Jessie was aged fifteen, her father took the somewhat unusual step of sending his youngest daughter away to boarding school. No details are available regarding the circumstances in which he chose the particular school, Avonbank, but it would seem to have been a surprising choice for a ‘staunch Conservative’ High Sheriff of the county to have made (see 3.2).

Taking into account the prevailing restrictions on gentlewomen’s involvement in the public sphere in the androcentric society of the times, philanthropic activities such as illustrated by the above newspaper report provided opportunities for women like the Boucheretts to develop considerable managerial and administrative skills, perhaps by serving on committees, or in fund-raising. When upper-middle-class women wanted to occupy their time, ‘philanthropy was the vocation that most often sprang to mind.

Through the nineteenth century it was seen as the leisured woman's most obvious outlet for self-expression' (Prochaska 1980:5). A survey carried out in 1893 by Louisa Hubbard (1836-1906) and Angela Burdett-Coutts (1814-1906) established that about half a million women laboured 'continuously and semi-professionally' in philanthropy, whilst a further 20,000 supported themselves as 'paid officials' in charitable societies (Prochaska 1980:224). The 'deeply-ingrained sense of social obligation' meant that the majority of such young women grew up with some form of philanthropic experience their main rôle in life (Prochaska *ibid.*). The correspondence which Louisa Boucherett carried on with Florence Nightingale in 1866 (see EN.48) bears witness to the former's considerable organisational abilities – albeit carried on 'behind the scenes' – which, on the evidence of her later achievements, her younger sister also possessed.

As a corollary to the philanthropic tradition, middle- and upper-class ladies were not expected – even *allowed* – to earn money for their efforts. Even women who were forced by circumstance to seek payment for their skills were terrified of being seen to accept money, and there are SPEW archive examples where the handing-over of wages had to be disguised or passed to the worker in secret. The Society drew attention to the depth of feeling surrounding the issue in 1875:

The timidity which makes women ashamed to be known to work, is most difficult to deal with: it is not at all an uncommon thing for a lady to apply to the Society for employment, but to refuse to give her name: the mention of references strikes her with dismay. There are ladies who are so afraid of being known to do anything towards their own maintenance that they beg to be allowed to work under an assumed name; these poor ladies will submit to any privation, undergo any hardship, to keep up appearances (*AR* 1875:6).

The belief that women lost caste by accepting remuneration for their honest endeavours was all-pervading, and it was in the face of such prejudices that Barbara Bodichon (1827-1891), Jessie Boucherett and the other women who feature in this study found themselves struggling once their campaign to open up broader employment opportunities for women got under way. This attitude was not confined to women. The father of Sophia Jex Blake (1840-1912), the mathematician who was one of the first Englishwomen to qualify in medicine,⁵⁰ expressly forbade his daughter to accept any fees for taking on a tutorship at Queen's College in 1859, as this extract from his letter to her indicates:

I have only this moment heard that you contemplate being *paid* for the tutorship. It would be quite beneath you, darling, and I *cannot consent* to it. Take the post as one of honour and usefulness, and I shall be glad, and *you will be no loser*, be quite sure. But to be paid for the work would be to alter the thing *completely*, and would lower you sadly in the eyes of almost everybody (Todd 1918:67, cited in Jordan 1999a:36). [Italics as original]

It was against such a background that ‘the ladies of Langham Place’ and in time Jessie Boucherett, attempted to encourage and persuade women to equip themselves to be self-supporting, and to be proud of their efforts.

3.2 Jessie Boucherett

No-one has written a full biography of Jessie Boucherett’s life. My study goes some way to filling that gap. SPEW’s archives provide me with considerable information about her that has not previously been in the public domain. This thesis is therefore the first full documentation of the activities she undertook between 1859 and her death in 1905, providing evidence that she played a more influential rôle in the feminist movement than had been apparent from the work of earlier feminist historians. Boucherett’s strong yet self-effacing character and personality emerged from the pages of SPEW’s committee meeting Minutes as well as in correspondence; and I provide confirmation that her wealth was undoubtedly a major factor in her effectiveness, as it enabled her to launch, support or keep alive many ventures which have made important contributions to feminist history. Details of these are included in this and subsequent chapters.

Whilst much of the material about Boucherett which appears in publications or obituaries does contain considerable detail about her public activities, none offers a complete profile of the woman and her achievements. In particular, there is little known about her before she reached her ‘thirties (see Illustration 3.2). Some authors, too, have been content to reproduce information printed elsewhere, and by the nature of so many repetitions, incorrect claims have been accepted as fact. Some such examples (for example Borer 1975:271) relate to the erroneous viewpoint that the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (NAPSS)⁵¹ was responsible for SPEW’s foundation, or that it was ‘the editorial board of the *English Woman’s Journal*’ as was claimed in at least one publication.⁵² Banks attributed SPEW’s founding to ‘the Langham Place Group’ (Banks 1981:38).

ILLUSTRATION 3.2

Jessie Boucherett, c. 1860



ILLUSTRATION 3.3

Willingham Hall, the Boucherett family seat (since demolished)



Willingham House showing the west and south fronts from across the lake.



The south front of Willingham House, showing the service wing which was added to the earlier house.

Another source (Crawford 1999:71) said that Boucherett was the cousin of Florence Nightingale: she was not. Even one of the contributors to an appreciation of her, published with her obituary in the *Englishwoman's Review* (a journal launched after the demise of the *EWJ*, owned by Boucherett from 1866 and which she also edited for some years) did not seem fully aware of the part she had played in pioneering women's technical training (*EWJ* 15.1.1906:5).

Boucherett was deeply committed to many issues relating to women's economic and social situation, in addition to her 'life's work' with SPEW (see Appendix 17 for her publications). In 1888, for instance, she was associated with the raising of funds to build Sloane Gardens House, a building whose rooms would be let out to ladies who, 'for less rent', would be able to live in a better neighbourhood than the 'comfortless' lodgings they could otherwise afford (Crawford 2002:207). In another enterprise, towards the end of her life, she and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925) who was a close friend of Barbara Bodichon, established an Association for the Promotion of Food Production by Women, whose aim was to set up a School for Women where they could 'obtain a thorough technical training in fruit, flower and vegetable culture, poultry and pig rearing, pig keeping and dairy work' (Crawford 2002:235). There is no record of the success or otherwise of this venture: a mention by Theodore Stanton (to whose book Boucherett contributed a chapter) of Boucherett's being 'anxious to persuade poor ladies to turn their attention to [this]'⁵³ is one of the few other places where her interest in this aspect of women's work is recorded (Stanton 1884:90-1). Her contributions to the struggle for married women's property rights, to the purity and temperance campaigns, and not least to the women's suffrage movement, are well documented. She was especially interested in the issue of girls' education, as were many of the other women from the Langham Place circle. Like Bodichon and Emily Davies (1830-1921), for example, Boucherett published a number of pamphlets and articles on the subject.

As well as these more public activities Boucherett's obituarists record that she performed many private acts of generosity, frequently without making her involvement known to the recipient, as the archives confirm. Boucherett often contributed from her own pocket when a needy case was put before SPEW's Committees, when the rules, or the state of SPEW's funds, prevented the Society itself from helping (examples are included elsewhere in this study). Moreover, I suggest that without Boucherett's substantial private income and the symbolic capital with which this imbued her, her contribution to the construction of an emerging feminist identity (for example the provision of £25 – a substantial sum - to launch Bodichon's 1866 suffrage petition) might not have been possible (Jordan and Bridger 2003 *in preparation*).

A commonly-repeated description of Boucherett is that she was, in politics, 'a strong Conservative' (eg *DNB* 1905; *The Times* 21.10.1905:8; *EWJ* 15.1.1906:3). That she 'came from a Conservative family' is indisputable: indeed, she is on record at least once as stating that she was a member of 'a Tory family' (see

3.5.2). That she exhibited ‘strong Conservative’⁵⁴ attachments however, especially in her later years, might be challenged.

This study will suggest that at least two events in Boucherett’s life may well have radicalised her views to an extent not normally associated with a Tory upbringing: firstly, the years in the 1840s which she spent at Avonbank, a boarding school in Stratford-upon-Avon; and secondly, her exposure from 1859 to the influences of women comprising the Langham Place Group. Boucherett was not a *party* political activist on the evidence of her association with campaigning groups after 1860; yet it seems likely that she and others either did not recognise that her ideologies might have undergone some changes, or that she considered her focus on political ‘economy’ transcended any one specific doctrine. At this time, too, *party* political affiliations did not carry quite the same implications as in later centuries. However, it is clear that Boucherett was driven to embark on extensive quasi-political involvement. As Beddoe has explained, in the nineteenth century although ‘women were excluded from the formal world of politics, that is party politics and parliament’, this does not preclude the use of the term ‘political’ to explain women’s frequent challenges to authority during this period, for example in the abolitionist cause and in feminist demands relating to married women’s property, education, restrictions on employment, or the suffrage (Beddoe 1998:174). Boucherett was involved in most of these causes: she was in fact committed to ‘the same kind of political agenda’ as the strongly-liberal Bodichon, who therefore approved of the former’s financial and editorial ‘rescue’ of the ailing *EWJ* in 1865 (renaming it *EWR* on its relaunch soon after the demise of the *EWJ*’s successor, the *Alexandra Magazine*) (Hirsch 1998:205).

The principal issues which engaged Boucherett’s pen (and her purse) were the advancement of women’s educational and employment opportunities; the removal or prevention of diverse legislative restrictions on women’s lives and work; and the enfranchisement of women. The culture of *noblesse oblige* may well have been part of her early socialisation, and her own generosity may have led her to continue to use her wealth – and her time – for the benefit of others, yet the details of her actions suggest that ‘welfare liberal feminism’ might prove a more accurate label than ‘Tory p[m]aternalism’, a phrase which might be expected to describe a woman from her background.⁵⁵ Olive Banks has provided perhaps the most apposite comment when she notes that ‘coming as she did from a long-established and Conservative Lincolnshire family, Jessie Boucherett was an unexpected recruit to feminism’ (Banks *Vol.I*, 1985:33).⁵⁶ This chapter traces some of the events which may have contributed to this transformation.

A further issue regarding Boucherett, in the light of some of the conflicting interpretations of her characteristics, is how far she possessed leadership qualities, or was simply ‘one of the troops’ in the many campaigns which interested her. Her contemporaries were women who have subsequently become better known to historians than she has, and though most of those were likely to have served an ‘apprenticeship’ in leadership terms, for example through organising, administering and even in public speaking, *via*

philanthropy and involvement in charities, such experiences would not necessarily turn women into leaders. ‘The charitable experience of women was a lever which they used to open the doors closed to them in other spheres ... as a religion of action philanthropy ... gave them practical experience and responsibility, and perhaps most importantly, it heightened their self-confidence and self-respect’ (Prochaska 1980:227). SPEW’s archives offer indications that Boucherett’s confidence increased over the years: her dealings with Committee members became more ‘directive’ as time went on, as is evident from entries in the Minutes as well as the few personal letters which have survived (for example see Appendix 13). Nevertheless, she apparently retained a manner which belied her strength of purpose: according to one obituarist she ‘was almost ludicrously unlike the popular conception of a “woman’s rights” woman’ retaining her ‘great courtesy’ to the end (*The Times* 21.10.1905:8).

SPEW was not only the ‘brainchild’ of Jessie Boucherett, but it was largely due to her firm leadership – and her financial backing – that the Society remained effectively operational for so many years. Its success in pioneering ‘new’ employments for women owed much to her personal inspiration and determination, as well as to her meticulous researching skills. In other ventures, too, she showed that she was able and willing to play a leading rôle, often in the face of opposition or indifference from powerful sections of society for example, in the launch of the Freedom of Labour Defence League (FLD).⁵⁷

This is not to say that Boucherett exhibited strong leadership qualities from the start of her adult life, nor did she achieve all her successes single-handedly. She was happy to acknowledge the important part played by her ‘chance meeting’ with the ‘ladies of Langham Place’ in 1859 as will be detailed below (see 3.5.1). in particular her friendship with Adelaide Procter (1825-1864), in addition to Bodichon and Parkes. Without the knowledge, experience and networking of these women, she would not have been able to launch the Society in the way that she did; and without the confidence which she gained through that event, many of her other causes and campaigns may well have had less impact. Before outlining how these events unfolded it may be helpful to consider the type of influences to which Boucherett would have been exposed when she was a pupil at Avonbank school, from 1840 to 1842 (see Illustration 3.4).

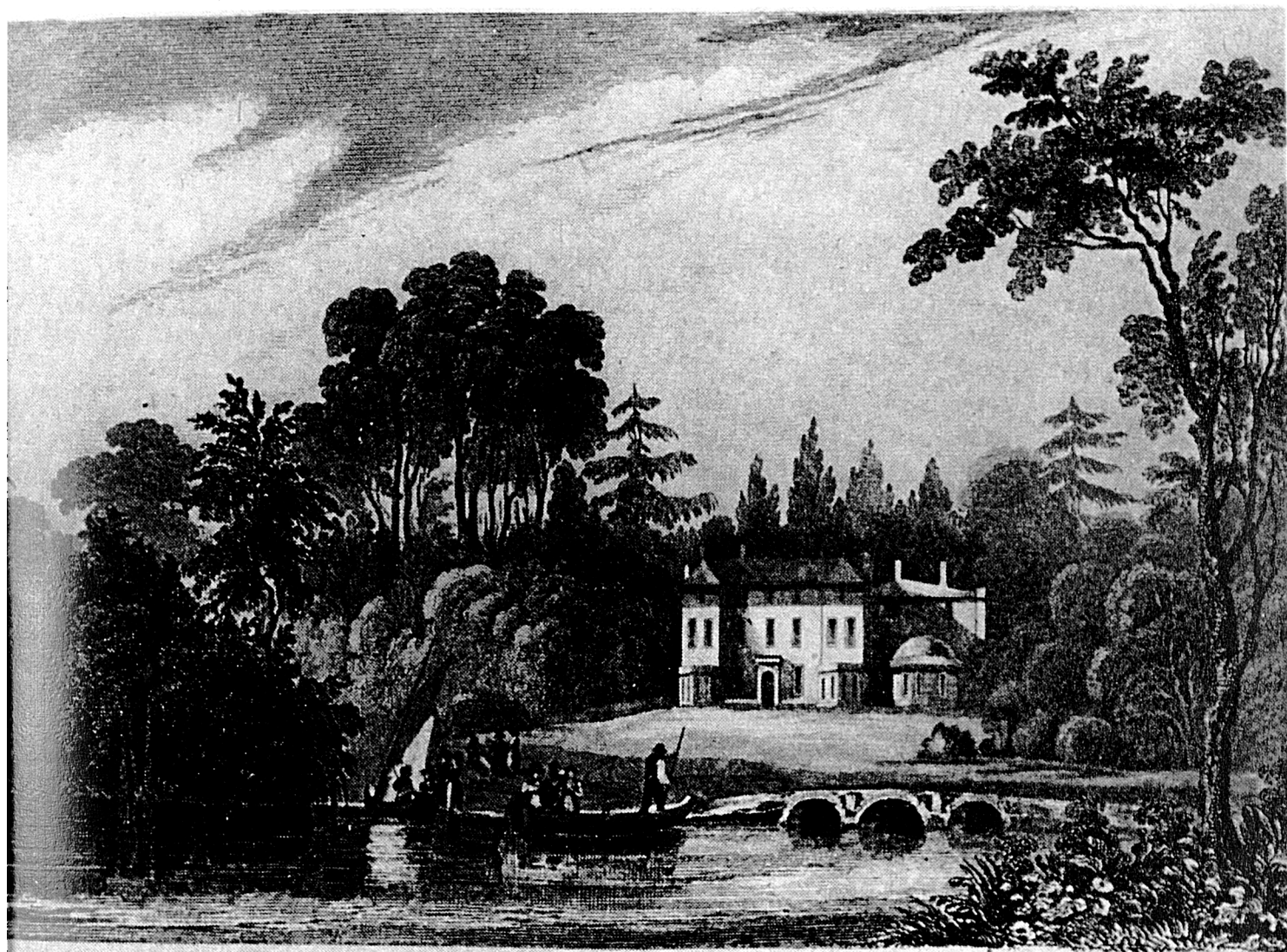
3.3 Avonbank School, Stratford-upon-Avon

Until she was about fifteen years old, Boucherett was educated at home, as was typical for girls of her class. As mentioned above, virtually no information is available from family history sources regarding her early life, but that she was a pupil at the school run by the Misses Byerley, which by the 1840s had moved to Stratford-upon-Avon, is documented by her obituarists as well as in a biography of the Byerley sisters (Hicks n/d, c.1950). Although by the time Boucherett was attending that school it was due to be taken over by the Misses Ainsworth, its ethos was likely to have continued in the Byerleys’ tradition, according to the latter’s biographer (Hicks c.1950:114). It is also apparent that Boucherett kept in touch with the Byerleys’

ILLUSTRATION 3.4

Avonbank House, after its purchase by the Byerley sisters

(Jessie Boucherett was a boarder here from 1840-42)



AVON BANK
STRATFORD UPON AVON.
Late the Seat of Lord Middleton now of Miss Byerleys
Published by W. Evans, Birmingham.

affairs, as she makes a reference in her 1863 publication *Hints on Self Help* to the conditions in which the last of the sisters, Jane Margaret, lived towards the end of her life.⁵⁸

This school – a somewhat expensive establishment for the period – was perhaps an unusual choice for Boucherett's father to have made for his youngest daughter. That it had a reputation for being a 'good' school, in an era when most establishments for girls were sadly lacking in quality is demonstrated by the recorded views of some of the 'eminent' families whose daughters were sent there.⁵⁹ For example, the widow of Dr Thomas Beddoes (himself a pioneer whose own vision for education was as the creation of a useful member of society) chose to have their daughter educated at Avonbank. Mrs Beddoes' decision, according to the Byerleys' biographer, 'throws valuable light on the type of instruction available at the school' (Hicks c.1950:31).⁶⁰

Avonbank was patronised by many leading Unitarian, radical families whose forward-thinking attitudes towards the education of their daughters allowed girls from such homes to benefit from similar schooling to that available for boys. The Byerley sisters themselves had grown up in intellectually-stimulating circles which included their mentor, Dr Samuel Parr. Parr, himself a high-churchman, had many friends drawn from nonconformist circles. The Byerleys' father, who was a cousin and business partner of Josiah Wedgwood, moved in very diverse circles. For example, he was welcomed at the court of Queen Charlotte; Samuel Taylor Coleridge was a regular visitor to the family; and through their Wedgwood cousins the Byerley children came 'into contact with some of the most brilliant intellects of the period' (Hicks c.1950:15). Josiah Wedgwood's friends, for instance, included Dr Joseph Priestley, one of the most prominent dissenting radicals of the time, as well as Dr Richard Price, a leading Unitarian philosopher and mathematician.⁶¹ Amongst the pupils educated by the Byerley sisters were Elizabeth Stevenson (later known as the writer Mrs Gaskell), 'Harriet Martineau's niece', and 'the two grand-daughters of Dr Joseph Priestley' in addition to 'Jessie Boucherett the feminist' (Hicks c.1950:81). The inter-relationship between many of these families was closer than simply that of headmistress and pupils: for example, the eldest daughter and first principal of the school, Frances Byerley, married William Parkes, the first cousin of Joseph Parkes, who was Bessie Parkes's father. The two 'Priestley grand-daughters' mentioned by Hicks were almost certainly Bessie Parkes's mother and aunt.⁶² There are other links with women whose names occur in this study: Julia Smith, Bodichon's aunt, was a close friend of Harriet Martineau, whose niece was mentioned as being a pupil at the school in 1830. Florence Nightingale, Bodichon's cousin, was taken to visit the school that year, when she was ten years old (Elizabeth Stevenson had left three years earlier) (Hicks c.1950:1). Another Byerley sister, Katherine, took over the rôle of principal when Frances married, and in due course Katherine married Dr Anthony Todd Thomson, whose sister was the stepmother of the Byerleys' distant cousin Elizabeth Stevenson. (Hicks c.1950:8)

As a result of all these influences, the prevailing ethos at Avonbank could perhaps be described as liberal and 'early feminist' (Hicks c.1950:114). That the Misses Byerley cherished less conventional ideals about women's rôle in society may be supposed by the views which Frances Byerley expressed in a book written in 1825 after her marriage to William Parkes. Her preface stated that

It is not the desire, nor the intention of the author, to maintain unmodified the doctrine of passive obedience in the married female to the will of her husband. Such a doctrine may be regarded as incompatible with that spirit which woman assumes as her right. ... It may not be invariably the duty of the wife to yield her passive acquiescence to the will of her husband. But experience leads us to acknowledge the fact, that those marriages have been uniformly productive of the greatest sum of happiness in which the wife has, at least, *appeared* to be altogether swayed by the opinions of her husband. (Hicks c.1950:73) [my italics]

Such challenging attitudes would not be popular with the average conservative head of household, a point well illustrated by John Ruskin's father, in an angry letter written to the father of Effie Gray, who was also a pupil at Avonbank in 1841, at the same time as Boucherett. When Effie's marriage to John Ruskin was being annulled in 1854, Ruskin senior wrote:

If she had when young got the Household taste of her Mother and her domestic turn – her character would have been different, but you sent her about visiting and thinking of Dress till she became unsettled and restless, and *then to these Boarding Schools where mistresses pilfer parents and teach Daughters the most approved mode of ruining Husbands* (quoted in Borer 1975:237). [my italics]

I have no evidence that Boucherett and Effie Gray were friends at Avonbank, but it is possible to speculate that these two girls might have shared exchanges on their views about women's opportunities in life: they could not fail to have been in daily contact, in a comparatively small school. For an intelligent adolescent, an 'enlightened' education such as that provided by Avonbank would surely have made an impression.

That Boucherett was intellectually gifted, in spite of – even because of – her refusal to learn 'by heart' at school, as was noted in recollections of her after her death, is apparent from her grasp of political economy, and her frequent application of statistical data to make a point. In one example from many, she produced figures for consideration by her fellow-members at a SPEW Committee meeting in 1898, comparing the level of wages given in the Labour Commissioners Report of 1892 with those furnished by the Women's Industrial Council in 1897. She intended to use this information in '*a pamphlet she had prepared showing that wages have decidedly gone down in many unskilled trades on the evidence of women who had been working for several years in the same industry*' (General Committee Minutes [GCM] 11.3.1898).

Boucherett may have been thought 'dull' at school as, on her own admission, she 'could not learn ... things she cared nothing for'. Her friend and Willingham Hall neighbour, Rose Corbet, was privy to a number of confidences about Boucherett's school days, and wrote that the latter enjoyed relating an episode when she had managed to avoid a 'Memoria Technica' class for a whole term by hiding in the cloaks cupboard. Apparently two teachers were each under the impression that she was with the other during these periods (Corbet, *EWB* 15.1.1906:5). There were other episodes which underline Boucherett's innate ability – and perhaps her stubborn streak. Corbet recalled that

like many talented people, she was a backward child when it came to the learning of the schoolroom; could not be taught to read, until one day she heard those about her talking about some law – some new law, she thought – something she wanted to know about, and she perceived they read about this in the papers; she saw that it might be useful to her to know how to read; in a week she could read. "The fact was," she told me, "I did know how, but I had never put my mind to the thing; when I wanted it I used it." (Corbet, *EWB* 15.1.1906:4)

The anecdote which gives the best illustration of the adolescent Boucherett's mental powers is also contributed by Corbet:

When [she was] an older scholar, ... one day a lecturer came ...; the girls were required to write down the best account they could of what he had said. Jessie Boucherett was the only girl who had seen the point of the lecture, and knew what the lecturer was aiming at; her account astonished the governess, who also remarked that one of the younger girls seemed to have understood a little; and Jessie had to acknowledge that she had shown the child how to *think* for herself and find out the aim of the lecturer ... (Corbet, *EWB* 15.1.1906:5)

One can only guess at the topics which formed Boucherett's reading material between the ages of seventeen, when she left Avonbank school, and thirty-three, when she was introduced to the Langham Place circle, but it is apparent that she developed a keen interest in the 'woman problem', and that her character pushed her to become involved in some form of action which would assist in addressing it.

3.4 Langham Place

Number 19 Langham Place, in London, housed the rooms used by a circle of friends, whose acknowledged leader was Barbara Bodichon (née Leigh Smith), where women interested in feminist issues could meet together.⁶³ Soon after Bodichon's marriage in 1857, her close friend Bessie Parkes (later Mme. Belloc) had visited her in Algiers, and from there had written to another friend, the Quaker Mary Merryweather (1813-1880) outlining the two women's plans for expanding their activities in London to include 'establishing a shop, for books, newspapers, stationery, drawings etc' (Hirsch 1998:133) and 'the beginning of a Club'

(Parkes Papers, 26.2.1857, Girton College 6/72). The monthly journal, bankrolled by Bodichon and edited by Bessie Parkes - the *English Woman's Journal* (see below), which had initially occupied premises at 14a Princes Street - was also transferred to Langham Place in December 1859. In due course, the women meeting at this address came to be referred to as 'the Langham Place Group' (LPG). The Ladies' Institute, as the complex was properly known, was 'deliberately seen as a co-ordinating centre for women's activities' (Rendall 1987:116), and quickly became a focal point, being used as a base by other groups; for example SPEW also mounted its operations from the same premises.

The immediate background to these events was that in 1856 Parkes had visited another friend, Isa Craig (1831-1903) in Edinburgh, and had come across a fortnightly paper, the *Waverley Journal* (*WJ*). Both Bodichon and Parkes joined the staff of this Journal, contributing articles during the early part of 1857. Dissatisfied with the quality of the *Waverley*, however, Bodichon negotiated to buy it out, with Parkes as editor. The *WJ* was duly transferred to London in September 1857, but on the advice of their barrister friend George Hastings, the purchase did not go through, and the publication folded.⁶⁴ In its place, in January 1858, a new journal was launched (as a joint stock company, under comparatively new legislation). This monthly paper was the *English Woman's Journal Ltd* (*EWJ*). Bodichon was the major shareholder but because by this time she was married she could not hold shares in her own name and had to purchase them under her sister Anne's representation. Parkes was again appointed editor, with another of her friends, Matilda (Max) Hays (1823-1908) as assistant editor (Hirsch 1998:184-7).

Both Bodichon and Parkes were born into progressive and Dissenting middle-class families, whose members were at the heart of liberal political organisation. These two young women had been friends for about ten years prior to their setting up the *EWJ* in 1857 - which they saw as a 'Working Women's Journal' - and the eventual emergence of the 'Langham Place circle'. Their mutual correspondence reflects their shared frustrations about women's rôle in contemporary society (Rendall 1987:113; and see Hirsch 1998). Both had already published a number of articles and treatises during that period: for example, Parkes had written *Remarks on the Education of Girls* in 1856; Bodichon, after studying the legal situation of women, produced *A Brief Summary in Plain Language of the Most Important Laws of England Concerning Women* two years earlier (as Barbara Leigh Smith). In an influential tract, *Women and Work*, published just prior to her marriage in 1857, Bodichon set out a visionary employment future for women. Although her closing paragraphs indicate that she felt that it was 'not very likely' that many women would enter the professions, she also thought that women would 'rather prefer those nobler works which have in them something congenial to their moral natures' than 'being in the army, mixing in political life, going to sea, or being barristers' (Smith [Bodichon] 1857:51). By 1862 the *EWJ* was viewed by Parkes almost as 'a mission' (Hirsch 1998:200), and by another of their co-workers, Adelaide Procter, as a 'moral engine'. This last epithet had a double meaning: Procter was aware of some tensions which were beginning to emerge amongst the Langham Place circle, and felt that the *EWJ* would not only rescue 'gentlewomen desperatc for

work, but also rescue some of the women working at Langham Place itself – presumably by providing an alternative focus to the earthly temptations to which she thought one or two were exposed (Hirsch *ibid.*).⁶⁵

There were other women whose names figure amongst the Langham Place Group, and who were also players in SPEW's affairs. These included Maria Rye (1829-1903) a solicitor's daughter, who became the secretary of the campaign to amend the Married Women's Property Acts, and who was later to be better known as the organiser of the Female Middle Class Emigration Society. Rye was the administrator of the law copying office which was initially set up under SPEW's framework, although with Bodichon's financial backing.⁶⁶ Another was Isa Craig, a poet and journalist, who like Parkes had contributed articles to the *WJ* in Edinburgh; she later became the Secretary to the NAPSS.⁶⁷ Craig's background, unlike the majority of the other members of the LPG, was not wealthy or middle class: her father was an Edinburgh hosier and glover, and after leaving school at the age of ten, Craig was required to earn her own living (Crawford 1999:148). Max Hays was an actress and novelist, but more notably the translator of the works of the French feminist George Sand.⁶⁸ Hays, who had assisted Parkes with the editorship of the *WJ* from 1857, also co-edited the *EWJ* with the latter when the *WJ* ceased publication, remaining there until 1862.

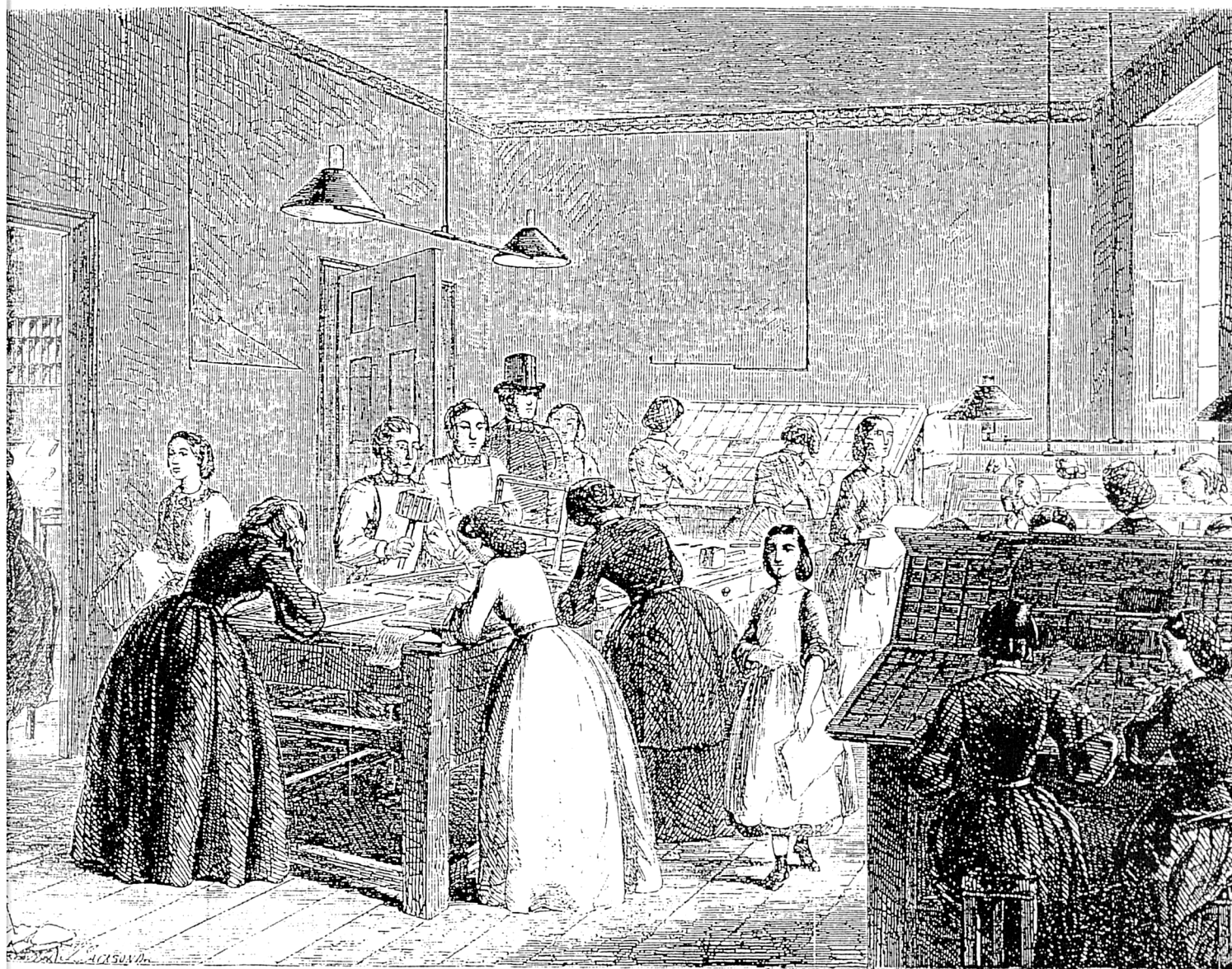
Emily Davies, a clergyman's daughter most famous as the co-initiator with Bodichon of what was to become the women's higher education college at Girton in Cambridge, also edited the *EWJ* for a few months between 1862 and 1863. The women's college began its operations in a rented property at Hitchin, Herts in 1869, and eventually a permanent building was established at Girton in 1873. It was perhaps Davies's inclusion amongst the Langham Place circle which sparked off some of the tensions referred to later in this Chapter (see 3.5.4) (Hirsch 1998:200). Davies had mounted a systematic and ultimately successful campaign between 1862 and 1863 to have the examination system opened up to girls, as the first step towards achieving her goal of gaining entry for women into higher education. Emily Faithfull (1835-1895), the daughter of another clergyman, also worked at the *EWJ* offices prior to being helped through SPEW to set up the Victoria Press (Illustration 3.5).⁶⁹ Sarah Lewin (1812-1898) was a secretary and book-keeper for the *EWJ*, but then served SPEW as Assistant Secretary for about twenty years.

The most significant young woman within the Langham Place circle, in terms of her assistance to Boucherett and therefore in the founding of SPEW, was Adelaide Procter.⁷⁰ The records which establish Boucherett as the founder of SPEW indicate that even before Procter's precipitate death in 1864 she had ceased to be a regular member of the Society's Committees; yet Boucherett acknowledged Procter's rôle in enabling her to *start* the venture, not least in the obituary she wrote on the occasion of Procter's death (Boucherett *EWJ* XIII, No.27, 1864:17-21).

ILLUSTRATION 3.5

THE VICTORIA PRESS

(from the Illustrated London News 15.6.1861:555)



PRINTING-OFFICE (THE VICTORIA PRESS) IN GREAT CORNHILL-STREET, FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN AS COMPOSITORS,

3.5 Beginnings and Endings

3.5.1 Launching the Society In frequently-quoted extracts, Boucherett is reported to have ‘caught sight of’ a copy of the *EWJ* on a station bookstall in the summer of 1859, and as the title attracted her, she bought it, and was then delighted to find that its contents mirrored her own ‘unspoken aspirations’ to help women achieve ‘better economic conditions’, which were necessary due to the problems associated with the many thousands of ‘superfluous’ (or ‘redundant’) women in the population (Blackburn 1902:50).⁷¹ She had already been spurred to take some action over this issue by an article in the April edition of the *Edinburgh Review* that year. This article, which had been written by Harriet Martineau (1802-1876) (although unsigned by her), made such an impact on Boucherett that she later included the following extract from it on the title pages of SPEW’s Annual Reports and on other printed statements from the Society for more than fifty years:

The tale is plain enough – from whatever mouth it comes. So far from our countrywomen being all maintained, as a matter of course by us, ‘the breadwinners’, three millions out of six adult Englishwomen work for subsistence; and two out of the three in independence. With this new condition of affairs, new duties and new views must be accepted (*Edinburgh Review* April 1859:336)⁷²

Not long after Martineau’s article appeared, and spurred on further by her discovery of the *EWJ* whose contributors apparently shared her own aspirations, Boucherett decided to visit London to seek out its publishers. She was taken by surprise by the appearance of the women she met there. Blackburn described Boucherett’s reaction to her arrival at the *Journal*’s headquarters, where

she expected to find some rather dowdy old lady. But instead a handsome young woman, dressed in admirable taste, was seated at the table. It was Miss Parkes; in a few minutes another young lady, also beautifully dressed, came in, of radiant beauty, with masses of golden hair. Such is the description given by Jessie Boucherett, long years after, of her first meeting with Barbara Leigh Smith and Bessie Parkes. She began forthwith to plan the desire of her life, a Society for Promoting the Employment of Women (Blackburn 1902:50).

Initially, it seems, her ideas met with little enthusiasm, especially from Parkes (see 3.5.4) but as Boucherett explained when she wrote Adelaide Procter’s obituary, she did receive immediate support from the latter:

When I came to London in June, 1859, desirous of forming some plan by which to promote the employment of women, I called at once on the Editor of the *English Woman’s Journal*, then personally unknown to me, and was introduced by her to the circle of ladies connected with this magazine. On that evening, so memorable to me, I found some twenty ladies seated round the very primitive apartment which then formed the Reading Room. After some other business had been discussed, I was presented to the meeting by Miss Parkes, who in a few

words explained my object. For a moment there was a general silence, and no one moved; then a lady came forward, expressed her approbation of the plan, and promised her assistance. An appointment was made for the following day, and I retired. The next day we met again and the lady being so complete a stranger that I had to ask her name, she gave that of Adelaide Procter, but to me this conveyed no information, for I had never seen her poems, and had no notion that I was making the acquaintance of a distinguished authoress (Boucherett *EWJ* XIII, No.27 1864:18).

For the next few weeks, Boucherett and Procter worked feverishly on the plan. Boucherett had at that time little experience of canvassing, and she willingly acknowledged the part Procter played in initiating her into the strategies necessary in attracting the appropriate support:

For three weeks Miss Procter came almost every day to the little comfortless unfurnished room, which we dignified with the name of our 'office', and here she would spend two or three hours at a time in drawing up lists of names and writing letters and circulars to which encouraging answers never came, and answers of any sort but seldom. It should be observed that in thus acting, she was not riding a petty hobby or carrying out an idea of her own, but was trying to further the plan of another person, a plan that was certainly very vague and which most people considered impracticable. ... At the end of three weeks the public seeming deaf to our appeals, I grew discouraged and should have given up the project in despair, had she not encouraged me to persevere. At length we excited some little attention. ... Something like a committee was formed; we assumed the name of the 'Society for Promoting the Employment of Women', a prospectus was printed, a little money collected, and our first difficulties were over (Boucherett *EWJ* *ibid.*:1864:18-19).

I have included these extracts in some detail, as a year or two after the formal launching of the Society a misunderstanding arose concerning the identity of SPEW's founders (see 3.5.2), a situation which gave Boucherett some considerable disquiet.

Once Boucherett and Procter had attracted their 'little attention', events moved swiftly. The list of people who were by now prepared to join them was growing steadily. A manuscript in SPEW's archive setting out the Society's 'Views and Plans', giving the names of the first committee members, lists Boucherett and Procter as the first Hon. Secretaries and Sarah Lewin as Assistant Secretary. Viscount Raynham, MP was the Treasurer, and in addition to Mrs Boucherett, Jessie's mother, the rest of the committee consisted of Mrs W Baines, Mrs Bayne, Wolryche Bridgman, Emily Faithfull, Sir Walter James, Bart., Mrs Locke King, Mrs Lankester, Mrs Wykeham Martin, John Pares, Bessie Parkes, and Lady Troubridge. Soon afterwards, a further contingent from the *EWJ* and the LPG joined the Committee.⁷³ Anna Jameson (1794-1860) was one of these; the others were Bessie Parkes, Isa Craig and Matilda Hays. Other members were brought in, apparently from Boucherett's own social circle: the Hon. Mrs W Cowper, the Lady Catherine Ricardo, and Mrs Tait; however, Mrs Cowper changed her mind and the other two became Patronesses instead of

Committee members. By January 1860 Emily Faithfull had been given the rôle of Secretary; Sarah Lewin remained as her assistant.

Even at the start of operations from July 1859 the Society was clear about its objectives. Foremost amongst these was the intention to establish

a large school for girls and young women, where they may be specially trained ... by being thoroughly well instructed in accounts, book-keeping, &c; ... Girls educated in this School would be capable of becoming clerks, cashiers, and ticket-sellers at railway stations. ... No girl would be admitted ... who did not bring with her a certificate of good character from the clergyman of her parish, or from two respectable householders; she must also bring a certificate of health from a medical man, as it would be a waste of time and money to instruct feeble or sickly girls in trades that require a considerable degree of strength for their exercise. ... (GCIP SPTW 4/1 Statement of Views and Plans, Early History File)

This early record is of interest for two reasons: it indicates how, from the start, there was a recognition that arithmetical skills - a particular interest of Boucherett's - were the key to improving girls' employment prospects; and that the Society was prepared to take a proactive rôle in 'screening' applicants (a point which will be considered in more detail in the next chapter), in order that the Committee could be satisfied that an applicant was 'worthy' and 'reliable' and would therefore benefit from the training. Although improving girls' education was very much Boucherett's 'mission', hers was only one of many voices (or pens) being employed on the subject. Emily Davies, as well as Bodichon, felt equally strongly and had published many influential articles. Bodichon had opened a secular co-educational elementary school in 1854 (an unusual arrangement at that time), and also continued to strive for improvements in the standard of education for middle-class girls for some years afterwards. Even by 1859 she had made such a 'contribution to popular education' that she was invited to testify to the Royal Commission on Popular Education set up a year earlier. She 'deplored the lack of properly trained women teachers for girls' schools'; she also contributed a paper on 'Middle-class Schools for Girls' to the Glasgow meeting of the Social Science Association (Hirsch 1998:243). Bodichon was a key figure, with Emily Davies, in the successful campaign to have the Cambridge local examinations opened up to girls in 1865 - a necessary preliminary to the establishment of their Hitchin/Girton higher education college (Hirsch 1998:245).

The assistance of the women from Langham Place, therefore, was the means by which Boucherett was able to make a start on her project. The involvement of 'influential names' in the venture was another important aspect of its eventual success and survival. By November 1859, following the establishment of the link with NAPSS (see below), the Rt Hon The Earl of Shaftesbury was recruited as the Society's President, a position in which he played an active rôle, remaining in the post until his death in 1885.⁷⁴ The Rt Hon William Gladstone, MP and the Lord Bishops of London and of Oxford served as Vice-Presidents; Vice

Chancellor Sir William Page Wood (later Lord Hatherley) completed the eminent team of gentlemen heading the Society. By 1869 Queen Victoria had consented to be its patron, as did HRH The Crown Princess of Prussia and HRH The Princess Louise.

The affiliation with the NAPSS occurred towards the end of 1859. The new Society's first few months must still have been uncertain ones for Boucherett, who recognised that if they were to carry out the work which she envisaged, the Society would need to carry credibility, and prestige. At this stage in her life, Boucherett had not achieved any public recognition, unlike other Langham Place members such as Bodichon and Parkes. To that end, 'being anxious to take every means to consolidate its constitution and to place it on a permanent basis' she was 'desirous that the Society should, if possible, be connected with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, in order to obtain the sanction and support of that important Association, and to be strengthened by its yearly increasing weight and influence' (GCIP SPTW 4/1).⁷⁵ Consequently, she 'applied on the subject to Mr Hastings,⁷⁶ who informed her that 'the question of such an affiliation ... must be laid before the Council of the National Association; but that [should the application be entertained] ... our Society would probably be required to modify some of its rules.' As the NAPSS had previously expressed its own interest in expanding women's employment opportunities, SPEW's request for affiliation was favourably received, although there were some dissenting voices on the Association's committee.

The NAPSS applied certain conditions on SPEW prior to confirming the affiliation: a committee to consider 'Female Employment' was to be set up within NAPSS consisting of six ladies and six gentlemen; and the Association also required that the arrangements for administering and controlling SPEW's funds should mirror those of the only other Society affiliated to the NAPSS (the Work House Visiting Society). Of the six ladies selected, four were already members of SPEW: Jessie Boucherett, Bessie Parkes, Adelaide Procter, and Emily Faithfull. The Society then drew up a revised set of rules, and published a new list of its officers in February 1860.⁷⁷ Formal affiliation continued for some years, but by 1879 the Committee had decided to drop any mention of the Association in its revised Rules or on the title page of its Annual Report, and by the following year it finally rescinded the affiliation (see 3.5.3).

3.5.2 Establishing the Identity of SPEW's Founder During 1862 Lord Henry Brougham, the man who had originally established the NAPSS, was at the centre of a misunderstanding which caused Boucherett a great deal of anguish. At a fairly early stage in her public activities, Boucherett had apparently not been identified by everyone as the initiator of SPEW: she may well have taken a 'back seat' during early Committee meetings but subsequent events demonstrate that she took a far greater 'proprietary' interest in the Society's activities than did any other members, clearly seeing herself as its linchpin (and frequently as its bankroller).⁷⁸ There are no other known instances in her life where she appeared to be anxious to 'support [her] character for veracity', other than on this occasion when recognition of her rôle as

founder of SPEW was misrepresented (Boucherett's letter to SPEW Chairman, 25.6.1862). In his speech at the 1862 Social Science Congress, subsequently reported in *The Times* in May 1862, Lord Brougham had named Bessie Parkes and Emily Faithfull as the founders of SPEW.⁷⁹ A Committee member, Mrs Locke King, had drawn the Secretary's attention to this (see Appendices 3 and 3a for transcriptions). Boucherett then wrote an agitated letter to the Chairman of SPEW's Committee, and a similar one a day or two later to Parkes who at the time was editing the *EWJ*, making it clear that she was upset about this misrepresentation, and that she wished to try to clarify the 'truth' for the sake of 'workers and friends of the cause' lest 'it may therefore be thought that I have put forward unfounded contentions or at least allowed others to do so for me'. The letter to the Chairman of SPEW's Committee, enclosing 'papers which I think prove [Lord Brougham's] statement not to be true' expressed the hope that the Committee would

pass a resolution to the Hon. Sec. of the Social Science Association together with a letter calling his attention to the error in Ld Brougham's speech and requesting him to endeavour to prevent a repetition of similar mistakes concerning the Society from being made at future S.S. Congresses. ... (Boucherett to SPEW Chairman 25.6.1862. See Appendix 3b:iv-vi for a transcription of this letter).

Whilst she did not actually *request* the Committee to write to Lord Brougham himself, 'explaining the facts', she hoped they would wish to do so, because 'a relation of mine told him the truth and was evidently not believed'. In the letter which she sent to Parkes on 29 June (Appendix 3c:viii), she referred to an incident which had occurred two years earlier when Lord Brougham had made a similar 'mistake', noting that when George Hastings and Isa Craig could have corrected him, they failed to do so. Boucherett added: 'Why Mr Hastings should have been unwilling to do me justice I cannot imagine, it is hardly possible that I should have given him personal offence, but I suppose he is a great radical and does not like to acknowledge that the member of a Tory family should have started this thing' (Boucherett to Parkes 29.6.1862). She was prepared for Parkes to print a 'correction' in the *EWJ*, crediting Adelaide Procter and herself with SPEW's foundation, but she insisted that *The Times* should not be contacted, as 'any contradiction of Ld Brougham's statement in the newspapers would be uncourteous towards him, and I may say disagreeable to me so the general public must continue to give Miss Parkes and Miss Faithfull the credit of being our founders and I am contented it should be so' (Boucherett letters, GCIP SPTW 4/1 25 & 29.6.1862). This incident no doubt explains why there has been some disagreement between subsequent historians regarding the identity of SPEW's founders.

The matter was resolved satisfactorily according to the Minutes of a meeting under Lord Shaftesbury's chairmanship, which recorded that '*Miss Craig had had an interview with Lord Brougham & had pointed out to him an error in his Address with regard to the founding of the Society...*' as well as a resolution '*that the Committee fully recognise that Miss Boucherett*

founded the Society, & request the Secretary to forward to her a statement to this effect (GCM 27.6.1862). The *EWJ* carried a correction in its August issue (*EWJ* Vol.IX, No.54 1862:379).

3.5.3 Changes to SPEW's Committee Shortly before the above situation arose, other circumstances caused ripples amongst SPEW's Committee members. I have little evidence that these were directly connected with the uneasy relationship with NAPSS which was beginning to manifest itself, but it is possible to speculate that some members of the Committee felt a greater affinity with the more prestigious NAPSS than to the fledgling SPEW, and so took an opportunity to sever their connections with the latter when relationships between the two organisations appeared to be under strain.⁸⁰

I might also speculate on another potential cause of disaffection. At Langham Place, the circle of young feminists had been enjoying considerable freedom and autonomy in their activities and it is possible that by the start of 1862 they began to feel themselves marginalised within SPEW's Committee, and were not enjoying the same kind of control which they held at the *EWJ* and at the Langham Place meetings. At about this time, too, tensions were beginning to emerge at Langham Place itself amongst the editorial team of the *EWJ*, with different loyalties manifesting themselves (see 3.5.4). Many of these team members were the same women who were serving on SPEW's Committee, for example Isa Craig, Emily Faithfull, Matilda Hays, Bessie Parkes, and Adelaide Procter. During the first two years of its existence, SPEW's twenty-six Committee meetings were attended on a fairly regular basis by no less than eleven different Members of Parliament (male of course), many of whom were also titled, and three female members of the aristocracy. The rest of the Committee was made up of the above-named women from the Langham Place circle (in addition to Jessie Boucherett – see Table 3.1). It is therefore possible that marginalisation was a factor in the events which followed.

The sequence of events concerning the NAPSS was precipitated by a letter which Matilda (Max) Hays had written to *The Times* on the subject of prostitution (see Appendix 18), published on 29 April 1862, which had upset a member of that Association, Mr A Edgar.⁸¹ He wrote to SPEW's Secretary, stating that 'the great offence which this letter has generally given renders it necessary in my opinion that Miss Hays should cease to be a member of your Committee'.⁸² He added that if the Committee did not agree to this, he would 'move ... that the resolution passed Oct. 22d 1859 be rescinded and that the connexion between the Association & your Society cease'. The subsequent exchange of letters, recorded in SPEW's Minutes, indicates that the Society closed ranks, resisting any interference from NAPSS in the running of their affairs, and therefore refusing to request Hays's resignation. Nevertheless Hays, who had received a similar letter from Edgar, did offer her resignation to the Committee on 8 May. After some discussion by the Committee this was initially accepted, but then rejected; nevertheless Hays reiterated her intention on 20 May, and this time the resignation was accepted (GCM 8 & 20.5.1862). The Minutes do not specify the details of the 8 May discussion, but they do record that at that same meeting Adelaide Procter indicated that

TABLE 3.1
Members Present at SPEW General Committee Meetings During 1862

Committee Member	14.1	6.2	14.3	8.5	20.5	27.5	27.6	14.10	18.11	9.12
Edward Ackroyd					*	*				
Mrs Alicia Bayne		*	*	*	*					
Jessie Boucherett		*		*	*	*		*		
Stephen Cave MP							*			
W. Strickland Cookson		*	*							
Isa Craig	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Jane Crowe [<i>Secretary</i>]	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*	*
Lady Elizabeth Cust			*	*	*	*			*	*
Sir Francis Goldsmid MP *										
George Hastings MP				*	[—]					
Matilda Hays		*		[—]						
Hon Arthur Kinnaird MP *							*	*		
Hon. Phebe Lankester	*	*		*		*	*	*		*
Hon. Mrs Locke King			*		*	*	*	*	*	*
R Monckton-Milnes, MP ‡			*		*	*				
Mrs Frederick Paget			*							
Bessie Parkes	*	*		[—]						
Adelaide Procter	*	*		*	*	*	[—]			
Mr Bayne Ranken	*			*	*	*				
Lord Shaftesbury					*					
Robert Slaney MP			*	*						

‡ Later Lord Houghton

<p>KEY: * present on that date</p> <p> [—] resignation effective from that date</p>

she intended to resign at the next meeting: perhaps this influenced the Committee to reject Hays's resignation on that first occasion. (Hays also resigned the editorship of the *EWJ* at about this time.)

Procter's threat to resign was carried out, and she left the Committee in June. Her close friendship with Max Hays has been documented elsewhere (for example Hirsch 1998:196 *ff.*) and it may well be that she was demonstrating her loyalty to Hays by her own resignation. The record from the Minutes noting that she was '*placing her resignation in the hands of the Committee*', does indeed make a connection between the NAPSS issue, and that decision. The Secretary recorded that Procter had written

that the indefinite relations ... the Committee held with the Council appeared to Miss Procter to leave it possible for some member of the Council to renew the attempt to make any one member of the Committee individually responsible to the Council ... [and] the chance of such a discussion seemed to place the Committee individually in a position which Miss Procter had not anticipated when she joined the Committee or when ... she as one of the three delegates [at the affiliation] accepted the rules for the Society as they now stood' (GCM 27.6.1862).

Bessie Parkes had also sent a letter to SPEW, read out at the May Committee meeting, in which she communicated her own resignation. In the accepted convention, she assured them that '*her resignation ... would not prevent her expressing her hearty sympathy in the objects of the Society, & promoting them by literary and other means*' (GCM 8.5.1862). She kept her word, as she remained the public voice of the Society in its first few years, continuing the pattern begun in 1860 when she addressed the Social Science Congress in Glasgow, as well as Dublin in 1861, and through articles in the *EWJ*.

Other high-profile resignations were to follow. In May 1862 George Hastings wrote stating that '*at the meeting of the Social Science Council on 9th instant*' he had given in his resignation as a member of SPEW, '*his numerous occupations preventing him from giving the time and attention required.*' (GCM 20.5.1862). Emily Faithfull (who was also involved in a separate public scandal) resigned in June 1863, which meant that none of the leading Langham Place women who had supported Boucherett's Society was any longer involved in its day-to-day workings.⁸³ (Anna Jameson, the 'elder stateswoman' whose support was so important to the Langham Place Group in its early days, had resigned from SPEW's Committee in March 1860 – but as she died later that year, this could have been due to ill health.)⁸⁴

The dispute with NAPSS over the Hays affair did not lead to an immediate severing of connections between those two organisations, but links between them loosened over the next few years, culminating in

SPEW deciding to cease paying their subscription to NAPSS in January 1880, since '*the Society had not for many years received any benefit from [it]*' (GCM 16.1.1880).

3.5.4 Tensions Within the *EWJ* As has been suggested above, Max Hays who had been one of the original Langham Place circle had already been the cause of some disagreements amongst the *EWJ* personnel, partly as a result of what others, particularly Bodichon's friend Marian Evans (the author 'George Eliot' 1819-1880) perceived as her 'slack writing' for the *Journal*⁸⁵ and partly because her intense 'friendships' with other women proved to be somewhat disruptive (see Hirsch 1998:188 *ff.*). Hays's relationships with women were difficult for some Langham Place women to condone, quite apart from the friction they engendered: 'The passionate relationships Max sought were exclusive and marked by dependency, jealousy and turbulence' (Hirsch *ibid.*:104).⁸⁶ The LPG were also acutely aware of the slurs which some sections of the right-wing press cast upon their activities – thinly-veiled inferences such as that 'the Ladies Club at Langham Place [was] an almost orgiastic venture' (*Saturday Review* 7.1.1860, quoted in Rendall 1987:134). They were thus anxious to avoid being linked directly to any sexual scandals. Emily Davies was particularly conscious that her own mission in life (the advancement of women's higher education) could be damaged by public vilification of her associates, but she maintained her membership of SPEW's Committee until 1879, remaining closely associated with the Society ever afterwards and enlisting its support for her own campaigns at times (*Managing Committee Minutes [MCM]* 9.3.1894).⁸⁷

There were other tensions at the *EWJ* offices, not only those centring around Max Hays and later Emily Faithfull. Disagreements about the standard of its journalism had surfaced periodically ever since it was founded, as is testified by correspondence between Marian Evans and Bodichon, as well as Bodichon and Emily Davies (Hirsch 1998:188 *ff.*). Other differences arose around issues such as religion, as well as certain personality clashes: Parkes found it difficult to get on with Davies, whom she felt 'steammrollered over anyone who had a different opinion'; and the Anglican Davies was 'contemptuous of Catholics [and] felt sure that Bessie was heading fast towards Rome' (Hirsch 1998:200). She was right in that opinion, as Parkes was baptised into the Catholic faith in 1864. These two women were clearly incompatible, as is confirmed by a letter from Parkes to Bodichon which said that she was 'glad you saw [Davies] as a sick porpoise crossed in love because, if she could be so to you, whom she admires, what can she be like to those for whom she has a deep-seated contempt which crops up in many ways' (Hirsch *ibid.*). Even the close and long-standing friendship between the Unitarians Bodichon and Parkes was put under strain by the latter's conversion to the Catholic faith.

Other causes of discord at the *Journal* were more fundamental, as they concerned strategies for achieving their feminist ends. Davies, for example, always believed that the best way of achieving women's advancement was by eliciting the *cooperation* of influential men, and felt that the *EWJ*'s confrontational approach was more often likely to result in *alienating* them. She was also aware that the Langham Place

circle was not a good example of cooperative effort, writing to Bodichon that ‘the new & difficult thing is for men & women to work together on equal terms, & the existence of the *EWJ* is not testimony with regard to that’ (Rendall 1987:136). She noted that Parkes shared her view about the importance of avoiding antagonism between the sexes, nevertheless adding a contemptuous remark suggesting that Parkes had apparently forgotten this ‘when she begins to talk about centres and rallying points and so on, and showing that women *can* work together – at L.P. of all places!’ (Rendall *ibid.*; Dingsdale 1995:14; and see Caine 1992). Nor was Parkes the only recipient of Davies’s sharp tongue. Discussing an NAPSS meeting held in 1864, she commented: ‘We were afraid Miss [Isa] Craig wld. have ruined us by her recklessness in inviting anybody that liked to come ... but I don’t think she did any serious mischief’ (Dingsdale 1989:55).

Tensions – even jealousies – were almost bound to arise within such a small, close-knit group, and may well have contributed to the eventual demise of the *EWJ* in 1864. ‘The origins, the politics and the decline of the *Journal* suggest in miniature some of the difficulties which middle-class women in mid-Victorian England could face, as they attempted to define, and to organize around their own needs’ (Rendall 1987:112). Jessie Boucherett was not immune from such difficulties, but on the evidence of the small amount of correspondence written by other members of the LPG which refers to her, comments do not indicate that she was ridiculed or resented for her political views, her abilities, her actions or her personality. Nevertheless, there may have been a little sensitivity regarding the social differences between some of the leading members of the group and Boucherett, even if that awareness did not affect agreement on principles, causes and strategies. Comments on ‘background’ were not unknown: Marian Evans had written to her friend Sarah Hennell in 1858 that she feared ‘Miss Hayes (sic) has been chosen [to work on the editorial board of the *EWJ*] on the charitable ground that she had nothing else to do in the world. There is something more piteous almost than soapless poverty in this application of feminine incapacity to Literature’ (George Eliot letters, quoted in Hirsch 1998:188). Bodichon may also have manifested an awareness of the differences between her own and Boucherett’s social *milieu*, when having visited Boucherett in Hastings in 1869 after the latter’s illness, she wrote to Helen Taylor that Boucherett was

very delicate but full of ardour and life when we talked of [women’s rights] but I feel her health is broken for ever, I could not help thinking when I was there how much she herself had gained in happiness by allying herself so bravely with us. She has a vivid interest in life which nothing in ‘the society’ she was born in could have given her. (Quoted in Hirsch 1998:254)

Bodichon was wrong about Boucherett’s health, as the latter lived to be almost eighty. As Boucherett had been brought up in a land-owning, old-established County family whose Tory politics were far removed from Bodichon’s own radical, Unitarian upbringing, Bodichon may well have been unaware at that stage how far Boucherett had already been influenced by alternative ideologies, as suggested above (see 3.2 and 3.3).⁸⁸

Notwithstanding the changes in the composition of SPEW's Committees, Boucherett continued to have a close association with other members of the Langham Place circle and the *EWJ*. She contributed many articles to the *Journal* and as she had also taken over the responsibility for the employment register at Langham Place she would have been much in evidence at those premises. When the *EWJ* could no longer afford the rent for their Langham Place headquarters Boucherett moved SPEW's offices into the ground floor and allowed the *Journal's* staff to carry out their editorial work from the premises free of charge.

Moved ... that owing to the necessity of a retrenchment on the part of the Directors of the EWJ, Miss Vibart be invited to do her editing work, receive her letters, manuscripts etc at the Society's office free of expense, provided the Society can obtain the front office, and the Journal is published, and accounts kept elsewhere, and that no brass plate or other notice of the Journal be put up. Should it be desired to put up a plate or notice, a small rent would be asked (GCM 10.2.1864).

After the *EWJ* and its successor the *Alexandra Magazine* finally succumbed to further difficulties, Boucherett launched the *Englishwoman's Review*, which she herself edited for a time (see 3.2).

In the years which followed, many of the campaigns and causes in which Boucherett was centrally involved brought her into close contact with the 'original' Langham Place circle and although in the few references to her which I have been able to trace, it is possible to detect a tone of 'amused tolerance', such as Bodichon's, she was never the target of the disdain or even bitterness present in some of the other exchanges which are reproduced above. Even Parkes, who had initially been somewhat dismissive of Boucherett's plans to form a society – and had resigned from the Committee after a comparatively short period of office – was closely associated with her much later in their careers when they attempted to set up a Food Production Association (see 3.2 and Crawford 2002:235). Parkes's early doubts about Boucherett's credentials as a 'thinker' whose ideas were not 'based on sound political economy' were expressed in a letter to Bodichon in 1859:

As to my allowing my name to be on Miss Boucherett's Committee; I mean to join every Committee in aid of women, however absurd. You see, dear Barbara, there is little or no sound thought in the kingdom on this subject; but a deal of strong feeling gradually rising – Therefore we must sail with the tide, & persuade people into one's own views gradually, or nothing will be done (GCPP 5/90, BRP to BB 13.9.1859).

One further reference to Boucherett, this time on financial matters, came in an 1866 letter from Bodichon to Helen Taylor (1831-1907).⁸⁹ Taylor had asked Bodichon about the arrangements for keeping the accounts of the Enfranchisement of Women Committee's funds (EWC). Bodichon replied:

About the accounts, they were carefully kept but for a time by several hands. We joked about Miss Boucherett, for example, who gave twenty pounds and spending part of it before handing it over but she gave me all the bills at the last and the accounts are quite clear (Bodichon to Taylor 11.8.1866, quoted in Dingsdale 1995:203).

Boucherett showed considerable acumen with figures; and there can be no question regarding her scrupulous honesty, but perhaps Bodichon's comment does indicate that she presented a somewhat 'cavalier' attitude to such matters at times. Maybe Boucherett's 'lady of the manor' upbringing had equipped her to handle accounts; but her ability in employing statistical information in 'driving home' some of the political points she was to make during her lifetime was certainly unusual in a woman of her times. The category of feminism which Boucherett embraced led her to play a high profile rôle in other campaigns, such as those against legislation which restricted women's work; and one of the results of that interest was the founding (with Helen Blackburn, 1842-1903) of another pressure group, the Freedom of Labour Defence. It was in correspondence associated with this latter group that she indicated her high expectations concerning other people's financial dealings. In a letter to Antoinette Mackenzie in 1903,⁹⁰ she wrote:

I saw Miss Vynne here yesterday and she told me her views. She objects to being 'Assistant Secretary' and requires to be Secretary. I said to her that she was so Harum Scarum that if people sent her letters with cheques in them she would be sure to loose (sic) them. She admitted that was possible and she does not wish to have subscriptions sent to her (GCIP SPTW 4/4). [See Appendix 13 for copy of the whole letter]

The Freedom of Labour Defence, founded by Boucherett and Blackburn in 1899, had grown out of an earlier group, the Women's Industrial Defence Committee (WIDC), which was located within SPEW from 1892 to 1895. This resulted from an approach by Ada Heather-Bigg to Boucherett, suggesting a committee to '*watch all legislation that would affect women's work*' (GCM 11.3.1892). The Society agreed to set up a sub-committee, with Heather-Bigg as the WIDC's Hon. Secretary. There may have been some later behind-the-scenes disagreements, not recorded in Minutes, as after 1894 Ada Heather-Bigg's name no longer appears amongst members present at any Committee meetings, nor are there further mentions of the WIDC after 1895. However, the involvement in a pressure-group to 'guard' women from legislative interference in their right to work in certain employments, unrestricted as to the hours they could spend at work, was clearly a matter close to Boucherett's heart, as she remained committed to this cause (through the FLD) for the rest of her life (see Appendix 13a).

Although the Langham Place circle, and the *EWJ*, ceased operations within a few years of Boucherett's arrival on the scene in the summer of 1859, their legacies lived on. The importance of the centre was acknowledged by Boucherett almost twenty years after her first introduction to it when she wrote that 'from this small office and humble reading-room have grown almost all the great women's movements of the present day. They have long passed into other hands and become a shop, but I shall always regard the place as classic ground' (Boucherett in Stanton 1884:97). As I noted earlier, the archives of SPEW were deposited at Girton College in 1997. Since then only two scholars have examined these papers: Ellen Jordan when tracing women's entry into pharmacy (see Jordan 1998), and Michelle Tusan in her essay published in 2000 which outlined the contents of the Society's archives.

My thesis offers a further insight into the aims and objectives of this Society, and examines in detail its working practices. This study is therefore the only one, to date, which offers an extensive coverage of SPEW's activities during the Victorian era. In the study, I have confined my researches largely to the Society's activities on behalf of clerical workers: how it enabled women to secure training and find jobs in that area of employment. In doing so, I have considered how the social class dimensions of Committee members were played out in these complex negotiations. Not least, as this chapter has demonstrated, I have been able to clarify SPEW's origins, and to celebrate the central part played by its founder, Jessie Boucherett, who has hitherto been perceived as a minor, rather than a major figure of the Langham Place Group.

Part Two of the thesis contains two further chapters. Chapter 4 is concerned with SPEW's particular contributions to the establishment and expansion of women's clerical employment, and Chapter 5 details the various branches of office work which women came to monopolise by the twentieth century.

ILLUSTRATION 4.1

SPEW's Office at Berners Street

from an engraving 1889



CHAPTER FOUR

THE WORK OF SPEW 1859-1925: A SMALL BUT SIGNIFICANT SOCIETY

‘She was such a clever girl. It was a great pity she could not afford any training.’
(GCIP SPTW 3/35 Appeal for Funds)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter traces the working practices of SPEW’s Committees through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries, paying particular attention to the ways in which the initial focus on ‘the woman question’ helped to open up a wider range of employment choices to young women and girls. It details the Society’s rôle in making work in clerical occupations possible for women, and the ways in which such work offered entrepreneurial opportunities to some of them in the latter decades of the nineteenth century. The extent to which the Society’s efforts contributed to a more cooperative economic network for women, supporting their cross-class interests, as well as the partial erosion of the social mores which had restricted women’s activities in the public sphere, are also considered.

During the one hundred years which are under review in this study, the Society’s starting-point, that of getting girls and young women accepted into a wide range of new or hitherto non-traditional work (often through ‘trial and error’ experiments), gradually evolved into a much broader involvement in women’s affairs, although their main objective of helping women to help themselves remained central throughout. In particular, their contribution to women’s eventual monopoly of clerical occupations was on a small but significant scale.

When SPEW was launched in 1859 with the specific object of promoting ‘*the employment of women in occupations suitable for their sex, by collecting and diffusing useful information on the subject, by establishing an office which shall be a centre for inquiry, by practically ascertaining the capacity of women for some of the occupations hitherto closed to them, and by encouraging their better and more complete education*’ very few middle-class women were able or willing, at that time, to consider employment other than as needlewomen or as governesses (GCM 11.1.1860).⁹¹ The Society’s archives are rich in illustrations regarding the ways through which they attempted to address this situation, as well as providing evidence of the extreme hardships faced by many impoverished ‘genteel’ (and soon, also working-class) families whose daughters they helped.

From the start, SPEW recognised that they would first have to train girls and young women for *new* occupational rôles, rather than attempting to improve the pay and conditions of their existing ones. Improving their arithmetical skills was seen immediately to be the best route: '*The Committee will open classes for the instruction of women in book-keeping and other branches of business; and it is hoped that the pupils may be able to compete for certificates at the yearly examinations of the Society of Arts*' (GCM 11.1.1860). Articles had appeared in journals, for example one on 'How to Utilize the Powers of Women', published in March 1859 and almost certainly penned by Bessie Parkes (*EWJ* III No.13 1859:34-47), pleading that if girls' education could be improved, especially with regard to arithmetic, many barriers to employment would be removed. Boucherett's essay the following year, 'On the Obstacles to the Employment of Women', pressed home this point more forcibly (*Boucherett EWJ* IV No.24 1860:361-375).

In addition to their lack of arithmetical skills, women faced other barriers in trying to break into retailing. Shopkeepers were reluctant to take on female sales assistants, believing that women preferred to be served by men. They also thought that women's physical inferiority would be a drawback, making them incapable of lifting bales of cloth, for instance. SPEW therefore felt it necessary to 'educate' women to *want* to be served by their own sex, especially when purchasing millinery, ribbons, laces as well as removing the 'barrier' of an inability to handle calculations. The provision of arithmetic classes was therefore one of SPEW's first targets (see 4.2). The pattern was set; provision for training classes in a range of other types of employment would follow.

Later in its history the focus on *providing* training, which was such a feature of the first few decades of the Society's existence, gradually shifted so that by the end of the century they were *supporting* girls who wished to take advantage of training being offered by other institutions or local authorities. They did this by advancing interest-free loans to applicants for apprenticeships or other forms of training such as in horticulture, music or photography as well as by sponsoring a number of entrepreneurial ventures.

During the early years, too, SPEW's Committee members were well aware that the prevailing attitude was that women who were paid for their labours lost caste. Because society's view was that 'a woman's activity should be confined to her own house', SPEW felt that it was their mission 'to correct this impression, to show that it was a matter of necessity that nearly half of the women in the United Kingdom should maintain themselves, and that women, properly trained, may become useful members of the body politic' (*AR* 1870:6). That the Society's *influence on attitudes* might be as important as their practical assistance was therefore recognised from its inception. Prejudices had to be overcome, both within families and amongst potential employers. An early report noted some progress:

While many of its results may be definitely set forth in employments provided and instruction given, even more has been effected in the

general moral influence it has brought to bear, both upon the press, and upon the opinions of numerous circles in various parts of the kingdom; because this moral influence tends to induce parents to give a more practical education to their daughters, and leads to efforts being made in many provincial communities to carry out local plans for training and employment (*AR* 1861:1).

By 1901, the Annual Report was able to claim that ‘the influence of the Society has extended more widely perhaps than its actual work. ... it is quite impossible to say how far public opinion has been influenced by its persevering efforts and by the precedents it has established, nor yet how far the success of one well-trained woman recommended by the Society has opened the way for others’.

The publication of articles and announcements about the Society’s work, not only in the *EWJ*, but also in the ‘quality’ press and other outlets, were regular features of the early campaigns to raise their profile, and especially to attract more funds. As time went on, many members of SPEW – not least Jessie Boucherett – became centrally involved in what historians have named ‘first-wave’ feminism. They engaged in wider debates about women’s rôles in society, as well as being in the forefront of parliamentary lobbying on such matters as the effects of restrictive legislation on women’s access to work, and, for some members, women’s suffrage.

One feminist historian, Olive Banks, has suggested that the motivations of ‘first-wave’ feminists can be classified into nine different categories⁹² (see Appendix 19). If the ideologies which individual members of SPEW adopted were to be measured against her checklist, many women serving on its Committee might be identified as ‘economic necessity’ feminists, since their objective was to create occupational alternatives to counteract women’s financial dependence on men. Banks identified Bessie Parkes as an example of someone who apparently adopted that ideology, as she was mainly concerned to aid the plight of *unmarried* women, the group Parkes considered most in need of the means of self-support. However, whilst SPEW did expend much of its time and attention on aiding single women and girls, members were also concerned with assisting widows and those married women who were experiencing financial difficulties, so I suggest that Banks’s more radical category ‘economic independence’ better explains the Committee’s motivating ideology (Banks 1986:74-78).

In her later years Jessie Boucherett became an outspoken opponent of a further label, that of ‘protection’ (that is, where women were viewed as being in need of *men*’s protection): by the 1880s Boucherett and many of her friends were drawn to the view that women must resist State or union controls over their working hours and conditions, controls which were often disguised as concerns for women’s welfare, but which they felt were simply smokescreens to safeguard men’s better-paid jobs.⁹³

Not all the women on SPEW's Committees were active supporters of a feminist philosophy: nor indeed were all the members female. During the period under review in this study, the Society included many men who were prepared to support the range of campaigns launched by the Society, and to use their positions and influence on behalf of women's rights. As will be seen from Table 3.1 (see Chapter 3), a majority of the men serving on SPEW's Committee from its beginnings were Members of Parliament and in addition to the prestigious Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl Shaftesbury as President, William Gladstone was one of many eminent Vice-Presidents. Even when one such member could not himself present 'memorials'⁹⁴ to Parliament on behalf of the Society, he invariably recruited a colleague who would.

Ten years after the Society's foundation, an Annual Report noted that it had originally been launched to 'aid the daughters of professional men and merchants, who had been left insufficiently provided for ... and the principal aim of the Committee is, to discover what trades women can follow ... and [assist] them in procuring special training for such arts as are found to be suitable and remunerative' (*AR* 1870:6). Later still, further progress was detectable in the wording of a publicity booklet which, in addition to reiterating that the Society's objectives remained 'the opening up of new employments for women', they were able to add 'and their more extensive admission into such employments as are already open to them; the providing of technical instruction for girls and young women by apprenticeship or other means ... and the procuring of employment for them, when trained' (*GCIP SPTW 4/1 printed history booklet*, 1879:2).

The twentieth century brought new problems (two world wars and an economic slump) and some benefits such as increased opportunities in employment for women, especially those representing much older age-groups than the ones on whom the Society had focused in the nineteenth century. For example, some women who had held overseas posts were displaced by the events of the First World War and as few of these, especially the older women, possessed the 'transferable' skills which would help them find employment at home, they needed the help of organisations such as SPEW. Those who had worked abroad as governesses and journalists were particularly disadvantaged:

As regards governesses, many were teaching English abroad and returned to this country without means, only to find that there was no opening for them here in their own profession. They were mostly well-educated, capable gentlewomen who, with a short definite training in 'figure work' could be fitted for posts in banks. As regards journalists, they were very hard hit and, finding it most difficult to get work, many were in great distress (*AR* 1916:14).

By organising retraining programmes, and by resorting to the 'social networking' which characterised their class, members of SPEW were able to get employers such as City bankers to take on many of these older women (see 4.7).

As is well documented elsewhere, the expansion in demand for labour, including clerical work, which resulted not only from the removal of so many working-age men during the two world wars but also the additional demand created by technological advances, benefited women particularly during the first half of the twentieth century (Anderson 1988:2-3). The shortage of male labour meant that women were encouraged, even drafted, into jobs which had been closed to them previously, and women were at last *seen* to be capable of doing work which had hitherto been thought to be beyond them (such as lifting heavy ledgers) or at the very least to be unsuitable for them.⁹⁵ A number of changes in employment legislation and in the education system also affected women's eligibility for, and aspirations to, a much wider range of white-collar work as well as the professions.

All of these external influences had an effect on the Society's activities during its first hundred years. The following paragraphs set out the ways in which it addressed its objectives, many of which it achieved.

4.2 The Society at Work

The previous chapter outlined the events which preceded the founding of SPEW, and perhaps because of its links with the prestigious NAPSS, the Society's existence was given good coverage in a wide range of newspapers as well as through its own 'mouthpiece' organ, the *EWJ*. Boucherett made good use of the columns of that *Journal*, noting in 1860 in an article 'On the Obstacles to the Employment of Women' that the public were beginning to be more aware of the 'woman problem'.⁹⁶ Boucherett applauded the fact that 'during the last few months many newspapers and periodicals have raised their voices to complain of the overcrowded condition of the few employments open to women, to plead for the enlargement of their sphere of industry, and to urge that every facility ought to be given to enable them to support themselves' (Boucherett *EWJ* IV, No.24 1860:361-2). She was particularly gratified that 'the leading journal itself' (*The Times* newspaper) had underlined the need which SPEW had been founded to address:

We sincerely hope that a new system may be instituted at once, and that we may no longer see women who, like men, must needs turn often to labor for their bread, condemned, unlike men, to the ranks of one miserable and hopeless calling, or left with the single alternative of becoming, according to their positions, either distressed needlewomen or distressed governesses (Boucherett *ibid.*:362, quoting *The Times* 8.11.1859).

She went on to plead that 'the only remedy for this state of things is to find some fresh occupation for the numbers of middle-class women who are obliged to earn their bread' (*Ibid.*:362). She set out her vision for a 'cure' to help women to become self-supporting, for instance by persuading them to take up 'clerkships of various kinds', and in particular 'a profession that women could enter without the smallest inconvenience, and by which a considerable number could be comfortably supported', that is, as book-keepers (*Ibid.*:363). She recognised, however, that 'only a very few and exceptional women could at

present be found who would be capable of performing the ordinary duties of a clerk', and therefore girls would need to receive better schooling – particularly in arithmetic and grammar - than was at that time available to the majority of them. 'It may be fairly concluded that the one great and serious impediment to the general employment of women in situations requiring education and intelligence, is the general inferiority of the instruction they receive' (*Ibid.*:364). She reassured her readers that 'if women were qualified to fill clerkships ... the effect would be not to diminish the number of men now employed, but merely to prevent male clerks from becoming still more numerous' because 'the progress of civilisation is continually opening *fresh* occupations to educated persons; great numbers of women could therefore find employment if they were properly instructed, without displacing one solitary man' (*Ibid.*:372); and furthermore, 'fifty years hence ... there will be twice as many people employed in work which requires intelligence as there are now. Half of these ... would be women...' (*Ibid.*:373).⁹⁷

Boucherett was not the first to think that women would make good clerks, although she was probably the first to take practical steps to bring this about. Parkes, as editor of the *EWJ*, had published an article in March 1859 drawing attention to the situation in France:

In France it is common to find women, and sometimes even young and very pretty women too, employed as clerks and money-takers at railway stations, and it is affirmed that they do this business much better than men. ... Here ... we feel perfectly certain that ... in several departments of Government young women might be employed as clerks, especially to copy and draught. As, however, it would not answer to mix up clerks of both sexes, there should of course be apartments for each. ... It would in our opinion be well if every woman, whether married or single, were able upon a pinch to earn her own living. ... (Parkes *EWJ* III, No.13 1859:35, 39).

The reference to 'even young and very pretty women' was, one may assume, a tongue-in-cheek attack on the widespread view that all girls had to do was to appear attractive to the opposite sex, and they would have no worries about *their* futures, as they would find a husband, and would therefore be supported.

It would be erroneous to suggest that in her 1860 *EWJ* article Boucherett was advocating that women should work for lower rates of pay than men. When she drew attention to the advantages to employers that would accrue from employing women clerks, she was simply reflecting reality by invoking the language of the political economists: 'If employers found that they could get female clerks to do their work as well as men, and at a cheaper rate, they would soon employ them in preference' (Boucherett *EWJ* IV, No.24 1860:363).⁹⁸

As was noted in the previous chapter, Boucherett had taken over responsibility for the *EWJ*'s Register which was administered from the Langham Place headquarters (Hirsch 1998:191).⁹⁹ This Register was originally meant merely to match up applicants with potential employers, not to provide work themselves;

but the flood of women who felt moved to turn up at the office by the type of articles which the *EWJ* was printing was out of proportion to the offers of jobs, and had threatened to overwhelm the *Journal's* editor, Bessie Parkes. Articles about SPEW's activities exacerbated the problem. Parkes later reported to the Social Science Congress (in 1860) that the office had been 'literally deluged' with applicants for employment: up to twenty 'more or less educated' women were turning up at the office each day, asking for help in obtaining work. Parkes said: 'We had no sooner explained to the ladies who came on Thursday that the formation by the Society of model classes or businesses for a select number did not imply an ability on our part to find remunerative work for indiscriminate applicants, than the same task had to be gone over again on Friday' (Parkes *EWJ* IV, No.32 1860:114).

One of the articles which had contributed to this deluge had been published in the *EWJ* shortly after SPEW's foundation, entitled 'Association for Promoting the Employment of Women':¹⁰⁰

We are sick to our hearts of being told 'women cannot do this; women must not do that; they are not strong enough for this, and that, and the other;' while we know and see every hour of our lives that these arguments are but shams; ... It is the intention of the society to establish a large School for girls and young women, ... Girls educated in this school would be capable of becoming clerks, cashiers, and ticket-sellers at railway stations. It is also contemplated to establish workshops in connection with the school, where the girls might be taught other trades – trades well suited to women, but now almost exclusively in the hands of men, such as printing, hairdressing, etc., for instance, and possibly even watchmaking. (*EWJ* IV, No.19 1859:54-59)

The 'intentions' mentioned in this article quickly materialised into the facilitating of instruction for women in printing, law copying and in book-keeping. Printing was to be launched as a separate venture, with the backing of George Hastings, and with Emily Faithfull in charge; and the law-copying office which the Society set up was handed over to Maria Rye within the first few months (see Chapter 5, 5.5.4). The book-keeping classes, the arrangements for which were delegated to an executive sub-committee, were soon to become the responsibility of Boucherett (see 4.3) who extended that provision to include a 'commercial school' for younger girls (GCIP SPTW 4/1 Report 1860). The Register was also expanded: 'The Committee have to report a marked advance in the usefulness of their office at Langham Place as a centre for inquiry and information, as well as in better means of assisting those who apply. A principal feature has been the large increase of work in the register department, though the applications from employers are still insufficient to meet the demands of the educated class' (*AR* 1861).

Each Annual Report gave summaries under the various headings relating to the Society's work, although the ordering of these paragraphs appeared to give one Committee member, Mrs Locke King, some disquiet so after the 1869 Report she requested some rearrangement. The Minute therefore recorded that

the paragraphs headed Law copying, Commercial Schools and Book-keeping be kept immediately before the Register as, though they were to a certain extent part of the work of the Society, they were not under the Management of the Committee; but that the other paragraphs be arranged according to Mrs Locke King's wish, unless such alterations would add considerably to the expense of printing the Report (GCM 6.4.1870).

SPEW's first focus – on creating new job opportunities – soon brought with it the recognition that young women would need financial help with the costs of training, so a strategy was developed for assisting applicants by lending money on an interest-free basis to cover the cost of training or apprenticeships. At first, arrangements were *ad hoc*, but gradually a more businesslike pattern emerged (see below).

The Society received applications from a very wide age range, and until 1900 there are no mentions of loans being refused on the grounds of an applicant being too *young*. In 1872 a child of 13¾ was promised help with the cost of an apprenticeship '*when she is old enough*' (MCM 23.2.1872) and another aged 13 was promised a grant to help her learn stationery work if she had '*passed Grade VI*' (MCM 4.3.1881). On the other hand, a woman who wished to undertake a course of business training was turned down in 1899 because as she was '*over 40 ... it was considered that she would not be able to get an engagement in business at that age*' (GCM 20.1.1899).¹⁰¹ As a result of the upheavals caused by the First World War, however, older women did become a focus for the Society's help (see 4.7). In 1900, though, when a 14½-year-old orphan ('*the daughter of a cook ... who died some years ago*') applied for assistance with teacher-training,¹⁰² a loan was refused on the grounds that '*it is a rule that no loan is granted to any one under 16 [so] the Secretary was desired to write ... saying that the Committee cannot break their rule*' (CABMF 16.3.1900, GCIP SPTW 1/9).¹⁰³

Branches of SPEW's London Society were soon established in a number of other cities throughout the UK for example in Dublin, Durham, Edinburgh, Manchester, and Brighton, and also overseas (in Germany and the USA). These branches followed the parent organisation's working practices, even to the extent of setting up book-keeping classes (EWJ VIII, No.46 1861a:224).¹⁰⁴

The Society later became a limited liability company having been granted its Certificate of Incorporation in 1879. As a result, any new Committee members could be elected only at a general meeting of the subscribers. Later still, its name was changed to reflect the regulations of the Charity Commissioners. SPEW was required to establish that it was not an *employment agency*, but an institution helping to fund the *training and education* of women. It was renamed 'The Society for Promoting the Training of Women (Women's Loan Training Fund)' with the change being announced in the Annual Report of 1926.¹⁰⁵

As the twentieth century unfolded, so the focus of the Society's work shifted, reflecting women's changed occupational experiences and opportunities. No longer were they placing young girls in trade apprenticeships: they were more likely to be granting loans to women embarking on professional study such as accountancy, medical and nursing studies, teaching or secretarial courses. In 1932, for example, the Annual Report stated that 'the committee of the Society for Promoting the Training of Women grant loans (without interest) to educated women who wish to train for professional, commercial, or technical work, but who are unable to pay the fees', in contrast with the 1879 Memorandum of Association which had stated that its objects included

the training of girls and women for business and other careers and suitable occupations; the providing of technical and other instructions for such persons by apprenticeship and otherwise as a means to the above; and the giving to such persons who are unable to meet the cost of training such assistance during the period of training by way of grant, loan or otherwise as may be thought fit, out of the funds of the Society and other available funds of which the Society may have the control (GCIP SPTW 3/33 Memorandum of Association, 12.5.1879).

The Society's business was conducted through the operation of both a General and a Managing Committee. There are no separate records for the two committees in the 1860s – reports of the Managing Committee's proceedings were subsumed within those of the General Committee - but from 1870 onwards each Committee maintained separate Minute books. In order to be eligible to serve on the Managing Committee, members had first to be appointed to the General Committee. As reported in Chapter 3 (3.5.1) some of these Committee members were required to be recruited from the NAPSS membership. After 1867, when the Society revised its original rules regarding the composition of the General Committee, any additional persons could be drafted on to the Committee if sponsored by existing members (GCM 22.10.1867 and see Appendices 16 and 21).¹⁰⁶ No formal resolutions exist in the archive regarding how each meeting's chairperson would be selected.

The General Committee met once a month; but from May 1870 the Managing Committee convened fortnightly. That sub-committee continued to operate until 13 June 1902, after which the Society's business was recorded only under General Committee Minutes. From 1920, the single Minute book was headed 'Executive' Committee, but the business discussed in sub-committees such as for a range of *in memoriam* loan funds continued to be recorded separately. Frequently, Minute Books covered similar business but in general the Managing Committee books contain more detailed information about the personal circumstances of individual applicants than do those of the General Committee.

4.3 The Part Played by the Society in Launching Women into Clerical Occupations

Boucherett and her fellow workers had spotted a 'window of opportunity' for women as employees in shops and offices if they could be equipped with the arithmetical skills necessary for handling money and keeping accounts. The Minutes record the process by which this objective was realised, from a meeting in January 1860 when Boucherett first raised the matter of encouraging young women to obtain certificates of competency in accounts and arithmetic - a suggestion which the Committee considered '*premature*' (GCM 11.1.1860) - to the almost immediate establishment of the first classes from 6 February under the tutelage of Sophia Jex Blake (GCM 7.2.1860 and see Chapter 3, EN.50).¹⁰⁷ By May of that year, however, Boucherett had expressed dissatisfaction with the standard of instruction which by that time was being provided by a Miss Baker, and she proposed to the Committee that the organisation and management of the classes should be left entirely in her own hands, particularly as a large proportion of the funds had been subscribed especially for the project by herself and her friends. The suggested arrangements included the provision of different premises and the appointment of a new teacher at a higher salary. After a time, she planned to return the management to a sub-committee. She added that '*should the Committee decide not to accept her offer, she should establish the school separate from the Society, but that she would prefer doing so in connection with it*' (GCM 1.5.1860). After further consideration, the Committee acceded to her revised suggestions, and the Minutes record Boucherett as proposing that

her present terms with the Society with respect to the book-keeping classes should be altered, and that instead of the £50 per annum agreed in May last, she should receive £10 only, and whatever subscriptions and donations might be paid specially to the Book-keeping Fund. For this Miss Boucherett would undertake to pay all expenses of every sort, so that the Society would know exactly what its liabilities amount to. The Committee acceded to Miss Boucherett's proposed alteration in the arrangement, and at the suggestion of Mr Hastings ... Miss Boucherett agreed to present a monthly report of the Classes to the Society (GCM 5.6.1860).

Within a week or two Boucherett was prepared to extend her involvement, as

finding the girls who came to the school had received too little previous instruction to enable them to profit by the lessons, she was desirous of opening the school to girls under 14 years of age, so as to prepare them for being subsequently trained as bookkeepers &c. Miss Boucherett stated that if she received younger children she must provide some religious instruction, and that if this should not be in accordance with the opinion of the Committee she

was ready to carry on the school independent of the Society
(GCM 3.7.1860).

These events are quite significant in attempts to understand Jessie Boucherett's relationship with the Committee, and also her strength of purpose. At a time barely a year after the Society was founded, she was confident enough of her position and her convictions to 'stand up' to the other members in this matter: and this willingness to provide the finance for any venture to which she was committed would also be repeated throughout her life.¹⁰⁸ Such experiences were clearly cementing the establishment of the 'feminist identity' which she exhibited for the rest of her life (Jordan and Bridger *op.cit.*:2003, *in preparation*).

The book-keeping classes were available to morning students, who were charged two shillings a week, or to evening students, who paid ninepence a week. The first teacher was paid £40 per annum, but Boucherett reported that she had been informed by Mr Lonsdale, the secretary to the National Society for Promoting Education, that this was insufficient to attract 'a good teacher', so this amount was increased to £60, plus one half of the pupils' payments once Boucherett took on the responsibility for management of the venture (GCM 1.5.1860). The Annual Report of 1861 noted that

the adult class at Miss Boucherett's school averages 23 pupils, who are receiving a good education in arithmetic, book-keeping, and clerk-like handwriting, with such other knowledge as may fit them for a business life. When examined and certificated, their names are placed on a register kept at the school, which may be consulted by employers. Besides those who are trained from the beginning, women sometimes come to learn to keep their husbands' accounts, or for general improvement in the essentials of a plain English education (AR 1861:7).

This is likely to be the first-ever example of 'commercial education' being available to women in this country, and it could be claimed that it set the pattern for the inclusion of 'commercial subjects' on the curricula of non-grammar schools for many years to come (see below for a link with Frances Buss's schools, and Chapter 6 for twentieth-century experiences of the interviewees).¹⁰⁹

The Society was instrumental in launching many women into careers using the typewriter, again frequently enabling its grantees to set up their own businesses. The other major aspect of women's office-based employment in which the Society can claim pioneering status was in the use of shorthand as a commercially-applied skill. Chapter 5 (5.11) gives additional information about the ways in which women gradually took over from men as shorthand clerks, but here it is sufficient to note that SPEW claimed to have set up the first-ever shorthand class for women early in 1873. The writing of shorthand, later to be combined with the skill of typewriting, offered not only employment opportunities for nineteenth-century women, but also entrepreneurial openings, some of which are traced in Chapter 5 of this study.

Frances Buss, the principal of the well-known North London Collegiate School (NLCS), had strong links with the Society, and Boucherett's school provided a model for Buss's 'middle class' Camden school which she had opened in 1871 'for those families unable to pay the higher fees of NLCS' (*NLCS website* 'History of the School'). In her report to her NLCS governors in 1875 Miss Buss stated that 'courses of lessons in Shorthand and on Book-keeping have been given to some of the pupils during the term, and a short course on the elements of Law by Miss Orme' (*NLCS archives* RS2iii).¹¹⁰ Further confirmation of the link between SPEW's 'pathfinding' and the curriculum Buss provided is offered by Burchell, whose book traces the history of the junior branch of the NLCS, the 'middle school' later to be known as Camden High School.

Miss Buss had ... recognized the value of good technical training ... especially for girls with the less academic gifts. ... The Association for Promoting the Employment of Women (sic) had been founded in 1857 (sic) ... and in a school such as the Camden, the two movements for women's employment and education came together ... [so] book-keeping had been taught at the Camden from the beginning. (Burchell 1971:34)

School-leaving scholarships were also offered by the NLCS's governors from 1885 and 'girls were able to use them for secretarial training and language courses abroad' (Burchell *ibid.*) By 1919 they had 'widened the scope of the School's secretarial courses by the establishment of an Advanced Sixth Form Course in Economics' (Burchell *ibid.*:75).

Boucherett's own commercial school continued to flourish, as evidenced from Annual Reports:

The number of children, chiefly tradesmen's daughters, in this school is 28; and the number of grown-up pupils in attendance at the writing, arithmetic, and book-keeping classes is 12. ... Several [of the latter] are quite ready to take situations as clerks or book-keepers; and subscribers and friends of the cause would greatly oblige the managers of the classes by mentioning this fact to tradesmen ... [as these young women] are either without parents or whose parents are unable to obtain situations for them' (*AR* 1864:6).

There were differences in the circumstances of pupils attending the day school compared with the evening classes: 'The girls in the school are more fortunate ... as their parents are generally able to find situations for them by private interest' (*ibid.*). In 1865 the school had moved into premises at 45 Great Ormond Street, and numbers had risen from 28 to 80. The adult class numbers had dropped to four at that date, and the class had been moved from premises in Howland Street to rooms at the Working Woman's College in Queen Street, Bloomsbury where 'pupils may attend other classes offered there' (*AR* 1865).¹¹¹

References to the commercial school in 1871 grant it the title 'Middle Class School' and it had moved to 41 Regent Square. Boucherett – ever pragmatic - requested that the Secretary should '*observe what sort of training is wanted by employers, that the education given at the school may be adapted to meet the want. The school ought also to supply the office with apprentices*' (GCM 8.11.71). By now the school had over thirty pupils, and was including instruction in French and German on the curriculum: twenty pupils took French and nine German. The addition of these subjects was no doubt due to Boucherett, as she had published a number of articles advocating just such an improvement in girls' curricula.¹¹² However, five years later, in 1876, Boucherett took the decision to close the Middle Class School, because

the general progress of education in the last 15 years, and the establishment of good Board and Middle Class Schools for girls ... have convinced [her] that it is no longer necessary to maintain this private school. She has therefore made it over to the head-mistress, under whose management it has been conducted for the last five years, and who will continue to carry it on, on the same principles on which it has hitherto been conducted, making it her first object to give her girls a sound English and commercial education. The number of girls now on the books is 74. ... The fees continue to be 1s. per week for children under 10 years of age, 1s. 6d. for those above. The fee for the use of books, slates and other school properties is 2s. per term. ... The school will still be examined by an Inspector of Schools once a year (AR 1876:8).

The book-keeping classes continued to flourish until 1899 (see Chapter 5, 5.5.2). The Society achieved another major 'first' many years later (5 May 1920), when one of their 1860s book-keeping pupils, Mary Harris Smith, was admitted to Fellowship of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, 'the first and only woman Chartered Accountant in the world' (AR 1920:11). Miss Harris Smith had been elected to Honorary Membership of the Society of Incorporated Accountants and Auditors some months earlier, again 'the only woman' to be elected (AR *ibid.*). Harris Smith had audited the Society's books since 1891 and was still fulfilling this function in 1926.¹¹³ She was also the Auditor for Boucherett's Freedom of Labour Defence League (see Chapter 3, 3.5.4). (GCIP SPTW 4/4)

In addition to the expertise which they were acquiring regarding commercial education, the Society also set up classes in which young women could be taught law-copying. This was under Maria Rye's control, at premises in Portugal Street, as a result of Barbara Bodichon having provided the financial backing (see Chapter 3, EN.66). Instruction commenced in a rented room in Queen's Square on 30 January 1860, with a Miss Martin, the daughter of a law engrosser, engaged to teach for five hours a day at a salary of 12s. per week (GCM 7.2.1860). Boucherett proposed that the printing office which had been established at the start of SPEW's operations, under Emily Faithfull's control, should also offer lessons '*in return for a small rate of payment, distinct from apprenticeships*' (GCM 3.4.1860). This suggestion was adopted.

The Society continued to build up its knowledge of the contemporary employment market during the two or three decades after its launch, acquiring a reputation as an ‘authority’ on women’s work; and its representatives were frequently consulted by official bodies on such matters. Involving the Post Office in the employment of women clerks was ‘one of the Society’s greatest successes’ (Jordan 1999a:180). This occurred as a direct result of SPEW’s earlier efforts in getting women taken on as telegraphists, when that service was still under private enterprise. When the Post Office took over the telegraph service in 1871 they were encouraged to retain the female operators: a move which meant that there was already a precedent when it was decided to consider employing other women clerks (see Chapter 5. 5.10).

Thus, in July 1874 when the Civil Service was preparing to expand its clerical workforce, the Postmaster General was on record as stating that he proposed ‘at the most convenient moment to place myself in communication with persons who take a prominent part in obtaining (suitable) employment for educated women and by this means I have little doubt that a sufficiently large number of suitable candidates can be readily collected’ (*draft letter to the Treasury* POST 30/275 E [E3613/1875] File No.IV 20.7.1874).¹¹⁴ It is apparent that by referring to ‘persons who take a prominent part’ he had SPEW personnel in mind, as the Society’s Minutes confirm. Gertrude King, the Secretary, recorded that

on Saturday last Mr Hamilton, Secy. to the Commission, wrote requesting her to give evidence before the Commissioners on Tuesday the 24th; that she ... answered several questions relating to the work of the Society especially with regard to the employment of educated women as clerks, book keepers, secretaries, &c. ... had explained the training provided for book keepers, and had stated that whenever women had been employed in offices as clerks through the agency of the Society she had every reason to believe they had proved efficient, for they were constantly sent for when extra clerks were needed. That the Society was in the habit of sending temporary clerks to 14 different places. That in reply to questions ... she had stated that educated women would be willing to take clerkships commencing at from £80 to £100 per annum with a prospect of rising to £200. ... Mr Walrond, one of the Commissioners, had [then] asked her to call again in Cannon Row that he might speak to her about employing women to correct the examination papers of candidates for clerkships in the lower branches of the Civil Service ... (MCM 27.11.1874; see also GCM 9.10.1874)

The final sentence of this quotation is referring to examination papers which would have been written by young men or boys sitting the Civil Service competitive examinations. It must also be presumed that this was not the *first* batch of papers which had to be marked, but it is obvious that the candidates up to this point would all have been male, as it was only after this date that the Postmaster General sanctioned the

employment of female clerks ‘by means of limited competition’.¹¹⁵ Therefore not only were the papers *written* by men, but all previous papers would have been *corrected* by men. Mr Walrond’s approach to Miss King was therefore, in effect, inviting women to sit in judgment on men – a ground-breaking situation. It was only after this date that some of Frances Buss’s own students were presented for the Civil Service examinations (see Chapter 5, 5.5.6, EN.156). There is no record (in SPEW’s archives) regarding the remuneration rates which any male examiners might have received, but it can be safely assumed that the women were going to be paid less – certainly, as little as possible - as will be indicated by the following extracts from SPEW’s Minutes.

The Commissioners, who were obviously impressed by Miss King’s experience, had then asked her to suggest ‘*what would be considered fair remuneration. That she had at first suggested 10/- a day but Mr Walrond thought this too much*’. King – circumspect as ever – ‘*asked permission to give him a decisive answer to these questions on Monday or Tuesday*’ (MCM 27.11.1874). She then contacted Frances Buss, the Principal of the North London Collegiate School, who felt that her teachers would be interested in the work; between them they agreed ‘*that they ought to have 7/- a day but that they would not refuse 6/-*’. Needless to say, when twelve of Miss Buss’s teaching staff were subsequently engaged to correct the papers, they received 6/- a day. For this remuneration, they marked on average 25 papers a day – threepence per paper – most of which were concerned with correcting dictation and spelling, but three of the women (‘*who had passed the Cambridge Senior Examination*’) had been kept longer, to mark the arithmetic papers (MCM 15.1.1875).

Not all employers, however, were concerned to employ women on less advantageous terms than those offered to their male employees. Mr Roberts, who accepted female apprentice wood carvers, sponsored by the Society, reported that he had ‘*expected some opposition from his men but he had told them that the wages would not be at all lowered by the employment of women, as they would be paid exactly the same rate as they were, and that consequently he had had no trouble with them*’ (MCM 26.10.1881).

The Society’s claim a few years later that ‘no Society but this has attempted to open new occupations for women of all ranks, and to raise the scale of remuneration by improving the quality of the work’ (AR 1878:6) was only partially accurate. That they attempted to open new occupations, and strove for high standards of work from all their protégés is undoubted; that they raised the scale of remuneration is open to question. There are many mentions of their *recognition* that the women were paid less than men for ‘equal’ work, but no examples of a successful campaign to achieve the same rates. The Civil Service was one of the most intransigent employers on this matter. Where there *were* isolated instances of ‘equal pay’, such as the example above concerning Mr. Roberts’s wood carving apprentices, this was not due to the Society’s intervention, but his own strategy in preventing trouble from his male workers.

Miss King's and Miss Buss's capitulation regarding the rate of pay for marking the examination papers was typical of a number of transactions between the members of the Society and the employers with whom they had dealings. There was a recognition within the Committee that if they were seen to be too 'greedy' they would be denying women the opportunity to be given the work at all: yet this pragmatism conflicted with their underlying belief that women were *worth* the same as men, and therefore *should* receive the same remuneration. They realised, too, that many employers needed additional incentives to take on women, a situation covered by the euphemistic phrase 'the economic doctrine': in other words, firms would save money by employing women at lower wages than men.

Many years later, the Committee rejected a suggestion from a lecturer at the Queen's Square Working Women's College (see EN.111) that they should circulate all the accountants in London, recommending that they should employ women as clerks and book-keepers, because his draft circular '*dwelt rather too strongly on the fact of women receiving smaller wages than men*' (MCM 10.6.1881). The Committee indicated willingness to reconsider Mr Busch's suggestion after the next book-keeping examinations had been held, since '*there are at present no really efficient book-keepers on the books disengaged*' (MCM 22.6.1881), but apparently the lecturer did not let the matter rest. A few months later, the Minutes carried a further instalment on the story. Mr Busch said that

the object of these alterations would be to enlist the sympathy of the reader in the work of the Society and secondly to prove that it would be to his own interest to employ the cheap labour of women. He thought that the 25/- weekly mentioned as the average salary of women thoroughly trained to office work was too high and begged that the students often got no more than £20 to £10 a year (MCM 9.12.1881).

These figures were challenged by Gertrude King, who pointed out that his quoted salaries related to women who were also provided with board and lodging. Nevertheless, the Society did send out a circular, although there was no further mention of any response to it.

The subject of parity in wages continued to crop up in the Minutes for many years, reflecting continued public interest in the topic. In 1901, for example, a letter was sent to the Society from a Mr Walmsley, '*of the Outer Temple*' who strongly disapproved of SPEW's campaign to help women to be financially self-supporting, but who did at least recognise the problems associated with inequality. He wrote

I cannot agree that the question whether men's wages are lowered or not by the competition of women is an

unimportant one, because ... if a man does not receive enough to keep him and his wife, he either won't marry, or if he does, then his wife must go out and work too and leave the home to take care of itself. ... I think that unmarried women should be provided for by their fathers, and not by wages of a supplementary kind, cut out of the wages of brothers or other women's husbands. Of course, the evil would not be so great if women secured the same rate of pay as men for the same work (GCM 11.1.1901)

One can imagine the comments when this letter was read out at the meeting. Apart from Mr Mocatta, who was in the chair, the other six members present on that occasion were women.

A few years after this episode SPEW's Annual Report again brought up the subject of fair wages: 'It is to be regretted that the salaries paid to women are still less than those paid to men, even when they do the same work and are equally efficient. It would be fairer if the quality and amount of work done were considered without reference to the person who does it. Possibly, in course of time this too may be recognised' (*AR* 1915:6). As we now know, it would take another sixty years before women gained the right to equal pay for equal work (and over thirty years after the 1970 Equal Pay Act many women still fail to achieve full parity); but the nineteenth-century struggle was first and foremost one of the right to equal work, although that did not prevent feminists from noting and regretting remunerative inequalities.

It is easy to be condemnatory about King's and Buss's modest suggestions or their conciliatory tone in the example of remuneration for correcting the Civil Service examination papers, back in 1874. Indeed, it might be construed as meek capitulation; yet that response has to be set against the background of the pioneering nature of the Society's efforts at that point in time. To get even a foothold in a whole range of new employments – as clerks and as printers, to name but two major ones - it is apparent that a compromise had to be embraced. Gertrude King did at least manage to get her point of view on record, even if it would be well into the twentieth century before women in the Service were paid at the same rate as their male colleagues (see Chapter 6, regarding the Civil Service experience of Miss QQ). This short extract from King's evidence to the Civil Service Commission illustrates her attempt to establish the *principle* of equal pay:

Q: Are there any suggestions which you would like to make to us upon the subject of the employment of female clerks?

A: I do not think that I could venture to do that. The only thing is that we should be heartily glad to get suitable employment for ladies, who now very often become governesses and are really unfit to teach, I do not mean from want of education, but every one has not the patience to teach; and many come to me who have been thoroughly well educated and say, "Is there nothing that I can do but teach?" And it is almost impossible to recommend anything except artistic work, for which, of course, all have not talent.

Q: Looking at it not as a matter of fairness, but as a matter of supply and demand, is it not the case that female clerks would enter into clerical employment at a considerably less rate of remuneration than male clerks at present?

A: I hardly know what the male clerks have. I think that ladies would be very glad to earn as much as £100 or £150 a year.¹¹⁶

Q: You do not see as a matter of fairness why if a woman is equally efficient as a clerk with a man, she should receive a different salary?

A: I think that if she does the same work she ought to receive the same amount.

(Testimony of Miss Gertrude Jane King, Secretary, Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, at Civil Service Commission, 24 November 1874, reported in *EMW*, July 1875:297-301)

Another spin-off from King's appearance before those Commissioners was that a Mr Kelly (of Kelly's Post Office Directories) then contacted the Society to recruit women for his business. That this became another of the Society's successes is indicated by the following entry in the Minutes:

Read a letter from Mrs Feltham, who commenced work in a room in Miss Boucherett's School House about 18 months ago under the direction of Mr. Kelly, publisher of the large Post Office & other directories. She said that Mr Kelly had now given her a large room at his own office, 28 Little Queen Street, Holborn that she has seven girls regularly working under her and can take two or three more. She considers that this employment came to her entirely through the Society. The Secretary stated that she had visited Mrs Feltham in her new office, that some of the girls were correcting proofs for the directories others preparing the slips. Mr Kelly praised the work done by the girls very highly. Six of those at work there had gone to her from Miss Boucherett's school or were sisters of pupils. Their wages are 8/- weekly during the first year, 10/- during the second, rising gradually to 15/- (MCM 13.10.1876).

An insight into working conditions at Kelly's Directories is touched upon in the 1880 Annual Report, where the popularity of this employment is noted – even though, apparently, the girls worked in silence:

Messrs. Kelly, of 51, Great Queen Street, now employ 28 girls as clerks in preparing their valuable directories. It is little more than five years since they began to employ women, and the experiment has proved so satisfactory that they are gradually increasing their staff and putting more work into women's hands. Perfect order and silence prevail in the large well-ventilated workroom where a lady presides, who regulates the work. The girls are all steady and well conducted, no one having in

any case been admitted except through private introduction. Application, therefore, without introduction is quite useless. (*AR* 1880:13, SPTW/GCIP 2/1)

4.4 Financing SPEW's Ventures

All of the Society's original income came from subscriptions and donations, supplemented later by gifts, legacies or training awards from City Livery Companies, such as the Clothworkers' Company, or from the City and Guilds of London Institute. Income was always modest, fluctuating between three and four hundred pounds per annum but with occasional 'bumper' years. Table 4.1 sets out some examples.

TABLE 4.1
SPEW's Income, Selected Years,
1863-64/1914-15

Year	Total Income		
	£	s.	d.
1863-64	397	12	10
1864-65	296	6	10
1868-69	294	1	6
1869-70	389	19	0
1879-80	518	3	6
1882-83	453	12	1½
1884-85	556	12	11
1914-15	940	8	4

Legacies and other lump sums were usually invested, and the interest used to supplement the money available for furnishing loans to applicants, as well as to cover the running expenses of the organisation which included the secretaries' salaries and rental for premises. Loan repayments were immediately re-lent to new applicants, as they are to this day.

The apprentice, as a rule, is to repay the sum advanced for her premium out of her earnings, but as this can only be done by small instalments, it will be some time before the Society can be repaid; ... such assistance, it is believed, will on every account be preferable to the ordinary mode of giving money to necessitous women for the temporary relief of distress. Before any girl is apprenticed, the utmost care is taken to ascertain that the tradesman with whom she is to be placed is, in all

respects, worthy of the trust, and that the work to which he undertakes to train her is such as may be properly done by women (AR 1867:6-7)

The Society's rules specified that anyone could be a member on payment of an annual subscription of 10s., or a one-off payment of £5 for life membership. The Annual Report for 1882 contained a supplement detailing the donations and subscriptions which had been received from individuals and organisations that year, in all 136 persons, including Queen Victoria. Additional pages listed amounts *above* £5 which had been contributed by Life Donors, between 1860 and 1882. By far the greatest number of names – 54 – appeared in the 1860 list: the first full year of the Society's existence. The years 1864 and 1876 both offered 16 names; all the other years have fewer life donors than those. The bulk of the Society's income derived from annual subscriptions; but additional donations are listed against individual names of the life members, often specifying the destination of that donation such as for book-keeping, glass engraving or wood engraving. The Earl of Shaftesbury, the Society's President, was a particularly generous donor, with some gifts of £50 and, in 1862, £200. The only other individual whose *listed* donation exceeded this, by that date, was Jessie Boucherett's gift of £350 in 1872. In later years, there were bequests from ex-Committee members, or friends of the Society, which were often larger. Boucherett left £2,000 to the Society on her death in 1905 in addition to the substantial sums which she injected from time to time (not listed under donations, but mentioned in Minutes or correspondence);¹¹⁷ another typical legacy of £2,000 had been willed to them by Mr Pfeiffer in 1894, to set up a loan fund in memory of his wife. This bequest was controlled by the Charity Commissioners, who invested it and paid the Society £50 a year in interest.

The Committee realised early on that additional funds were needed to enable many of its applicants to take up the technical training which the Society was beginning to organise. Targeting new employment areas was only part of the problem, as many families could not afford the premiums required for their daughters' indentures. Discussions during 1865 resulted in an Apprentice Fund being set up the following year – one of many special funds which would continue to demand fresh injections of cash for the rest of the nineteenth century. Such fund-raising efforts were directed at the public as well as in the form of appeals to subscribers and Committee members. The Annual Report for 1867 explained the rationale as well as giving details of recent activities:

During the past year the principal efforts of the Society have been directed to the apprenticing of girls to special branches of industry, the Committee regarding this as the best means open to them at present of improving the social position of women. In all businesses which are at all remunerative premiums are required with apprentices, and, as it is a new idea to parents to start their daughters in life otherwise than by marriage, the difficulty of obtaining a premium is a constant hindrance to the efforts of the Society. The Committee are happy to state that the liberality of friends has partially obviated this difficulty, and they have been assisted to establish a Fund to aid, by loan or otherwise, such girls as are willing to sign indentures, but whose friends are unable to provide the necessary premium. (AR 1867:6)

In the first few decades of its existence, SPEW's arrangements for the repayment of loans or the financing of specific ventures were dealt with on a case-by-case basis, although always interest-free. Sometimes, an applicant would be *given* part of the money needed, with the rest lent. When Susan Whippert needed £5 for her indentures so that she could be taught envelope addressing and stationery work, the Committee '*resolved to give [her] £2 10s of the premium and to lend her the remainder which should be repaid from her earnings during the 1st year of her apprenticeship (MCM 7.2.1872)*. They had obviously been moved by her circumstances: her father was dead, her mother a servant in '*a house of business*' and the girl lived with her partially-paralysed grandmother and an uncle (*ibid.*)

In later years, there were examples of individually-structured repayment arrangements: '*Resolved that a loan of £5 be granted to Marion Cole, to be repaid by instalments of 6d weekly from her wages, during her apprenticeship*' (GCM 17.6.1892). Much later (1932) the rules of the Society incorporated the formal expectation that loans would be repaid at the rate of not less than fifteen per cent of the grantees' salary, once she had begun earning on completion of her training.¹¹⁸

There are many cases in the Society's records which indicate the extraordinary degree to which the Committee members were prepared to be patient and understanding over loan repayments or to support women in whom they had developed a special interest. An example from many similar ones will illustrate this. One young woman, Miss Jevons, received a loan of £30 in 1919, when she was about twenty years old, to start training as a Montessori teacher. When this did not work out, she enrolled on a training scheme as a housekeeper at St. Thomas's Hospital. This, too, presented her with difficulties. She experienced a series of illnesses, periods of unemployment, and a range of other unskilled employment over the next twenty-odd years, whilst also helping to support her widowed mother. Throughout this time, the Society allowed her loan to be used for the string of alternative purposes, and were remarkably patient regarding repayments. Indeed, the final instalment on that interest-free loan was not received until 12 July 1947, twenty-eight years after they had advanced the money.

The flexibility of their arrangements can also be detected in a further example. One woman who had previously had a loan '*for photography*' in 1871 wrote to apologise for not being able to afford the repayments as her husband had been ill, but she had '*a very beautiful set of antique blue Nankin China, a tea pot, cream jug, sugar basin, cups and saucers, bread plates which she would willingly part with, if by so doing she could liquidate or help to liquidate her debt*'. This she offered for sale to the Committee: the Secretary was instructed to ask her to send it to the office (MCM 11.1.1871 and 1.5.1872). Unfortunately, there is no further mention of the china, so we do not know whether

a member of the Committee got a bargain or not: but it is apparent that the whole debt was not cancelled as there was another entry in 1874, recording that this woman had sent in a further instalment.

When lending money to help women start up *businesses*, however, SPEW's terms, although very fair – and always interest-free – were more tightly structured. A typical example is the case of Miss Ethel Garrett and Mrs Marshall, to whom the Society advanced £50 (plus a further £10 from Jessie Boucherett) in 1884 to set up a typewriting office.¹¹⁹ Miss Garrett married in 1886 and as a consequence wished to leave the business. The Society was centrally involved in the subsequent dispute which arose between the two women regarding the dissolving of the partnership, and made sure that its initial advance was protected by a fresh written document once eventual agreement was reached. Jessie Boucherett, ever ready to use her own money, also lent Mrs Marshall a further £20 in December 1886 to assist her in settling the amount to be paid to Miss Garrett (by now Mrs Comyns). The balance of the original £60, which still amounted to £55, was repaid to the Society by Mrs Marshall only on her retirement in July 1890.¹²⁰

In the earliest years, applications for the Society's help were often made through SPEW subscribers or by people known to them; but if this were not the case, applicants were required to provide the names of two 'respectable' referees, as well as guarantors for any repayments. The criteria for respectability reflect the social mores of the times. Clergymen, doctors, the higher ranks of the Services, or members of the legal or teaching professions were acceptable referees, or people from Committee members' circles. The *recipients* of the loans – the grantees as the Society referred to them – reflected an increasingly broad spectrum of the social strata. Although most came into the category of gentlewomen in 'reduced circumstances' especially in the early years, those from working-class backgrounds were also welcomed: they were required only to demonstrate a particularly pressing need and that their choice of training was suitable (and, of course, that they were 'respectable') to be eligible for help. The following extract illustrates this:

Isabella Rose being desirous to learn vellum sewing and book-binding, and having applied to the Society for assistance in paying the premiums required, the Secretary stated that she had made inquiries respecting her parents, and had ascertained that they were very respectable people, that they had eight children, and that her father was foreman to a builder. ... Resolved that the sum of £4 be lent to Mr Rose for the premium for his daughter. (MCM 2.11.1870)

From 1879 the City and Guilds of London Institutes (C & G) arranged to make available an annual sum of £100 to be administered by the Society, towards the cost of indentures for apprenticeships in artistic or scientific trades, on condition that C & G personnel would be involved in verifying the suitability of the type of training being applied for. The money advanced to these girls was not a loan: it was a grant, but SPEW chose to make it known to the recipients that any repayments they made to the Society would enable

a larger number of girls to benefit from future assistance, as they took the view that ‘people value little what costs them little’ (AR 1883:19). The Society found it necessary to justify this practice to the C & G in 1886, after they were informed that the Institute was ‘vexed’ on hearing of the practice; but it must have been resolved to the latter’s satisfaction, as they continued to provide money for apprentices well beyond that date. The Minutes record that *‘the apprentices were always informed that it was a free gift from the City Guilds and that whatever was repaid was used only for helping other apprentices or learners. In no case was an apprentice pressed to pay, unless she was quite able to do so’* (MCM 5.11.1886). The C & G funding arrangement continued until 1895, after which that body decided that they had by then opened enough training institutions of their own not to need to fund applicants through the Society.

4.5 Nannies and Gatekeepers

The stated intention of SPEW’s founding members was to provide practical assistance to women, but given the social stratum from which they came, it is perhaps understandable that they would see themselves as not only the means by which needy women would be helped, but also as the ‘gatekeepers’ of the standards which they held dear. There was little doubt that the success or failure of their ventures depended on the ‘quality’ of their recruits: press and public would be quick to condemn if the women or girls were found wanting.

It might be argued, however, that the degree of care which Committee members exercised on behalf of many of their protégées could also be interpreted as ‘interference’. Committee women with a long tradition of philanthropy may well have seen themselves, if not *in loco parentis*, then certainly in a position of guardianship over many of the young women who needed their help. Class consciousness, so prevalent at this period of British history, encompassed expectations regarding appropriate behaviour in a range of circumstances, and these rules related especially to the ways in which young women conducted themselves: a phenomenon remarked by many historians of the period. The Committee therefore kept a careful watch – perhaps a ‘nanny’s eye’ – on the standards of behaviour and the images which ‘their’ young women were presenting to the business world. In 1876 the Minutes recorded that the Secretary had *‘had some conversation with four of the clerks in the Post Office Savings Bank’* because they had *‘protested first to Mr Thompson and afterwards to Lord John Manners against the appointment of Miss Smith as superintendent on the plea that her conduct was unmodest and unladylike’*. Such a challenge to authority was not considered appropriate, so Miss King said *‘she had endeavoured to show them that such interference on their part was likely to do considerable harm to the increased employment of women in public offices’* (MCM 9.6.1876). A few years later, a further example related to clerks who by this time represented somewhat wider ranges of social strata. Having received a report that the Postmaster General *‘had been obliged to*

dismiss two of the Counter women at the Post Office for incivility, and that complaints of this kind had become more frequent since women had been employed Boucherett proposed ‘*that the Committee should make an effort to gain some influence over the young women*’. As a result of this suggestion, the girls were to be

invited to tea at the office, [and] some entertainment in the way of music or readings should be provided for them, and that someone be asked to urge upon them the necessity of punctuality, civility and earnestness in the discharge of their duties, and pointing out to them how materially the future employment of women as clerks in the Civil Service depends on the manner in which they fulfil their duties (MCM 14.3.1879).

A soirée took place, and in due course the clerks expressed their thanks for the very pleasant evening, ‘*which they said they should remember as an incentive to greater zeal in their work*’ (MCM 25.7.1879).¹²¹ These incidents underline the balance which the Committee felt it necessary to strike between *pushing* for women to be taken on in a wide range of new occupations, and *restraining* some of those women from behaviour which could undermine opportunities for future placements.

Conscious that many of their applicants were very young and had usually never been away from their families, the Society’s members – and Miss King in particular – took care to investigate the conditions under which some of their protégées would work, especially as in some cases girls would have to live in the households of their employers, or in hostel accommodation.¹²² One offer to take an apprentice at a small printing office was declined, because ‘*the printer ... conducted & printed entirely by himself a small workman’s paper, & that the girl would often be left by herself at a tiny office in the city, & would there have to see any rough men who might wish to put anything into the paper*’ (MCM 9.11.1883).

The Victorian preoccupation with manners and behaviour, present in Committee members and employers alike, meant that considerable emphasis was placed on the personal qualities of the trainees. In a study on the pupil-teacher system of the nineteenth century, one writer has noted: ‘The thorny subjects of dress, comportment, tone and public behaviour were frequently discussed in connection with female pupil teachers and a common belief was that female pupil teachers required specific guidance in their dress and behaviour’ (Robinson 2003:196). The Bank of England – one of the last bastions of male clerkship – did employ ‘four or five hundred’ young women clerks during the First World War, but the Governor, apparently, ‘was pained by some of the costumes he encountered, and ... intimated that henceforth women clerks must wear black or dark blue. “with white blouses, if necessary, in the summer-time”.’ (Courtney 1926:164) The twentieth-century employees also remarked on ‘appropriate’ dress codes for their office

lives (see Chapter 6). My own experiences of working in offices and teaching in secretarial departments of colleges included expectations of the necessity for ‘smart’ clothes, and the strict taboos on women wearing trousers to work.¹²³ Handbooks for aspiring office workers, published as late as the 1960s and ‘70s, invariably included advice on looking attractive, or making the most of one’s appearance – which implied dressing in a ‘feminine’ style (see Leafe 1964; Benét 1972). Mrs NN informed me that her daughter had taken a full-time secretarial course in 1970, and had been told that ‘*young ladies don’t go to the office in trousers*’ (Mrs NN, b.1920). This abhorrence of women in trousers presumably emanated from the Victorian husband’s fear that ‘his status and self-respect, ... class position and somehow, his manhood’ was threatened if he had a ‘working wife’, a state of affairs which would be signalled both metaphorically and overtly if women ‘[wanted] “to wear the trousers” – a crime against what they would argue to be the natural order of things’ (Dyhouse 1981:6).

There are strong similarities between the approach to adolescent pupil teachers noted by Robinson, and the young women whom the Society placed in a range of apprenticeships and offices. Indeed, the 1882 Annual Report mentioned that many of the young girls enrolling on the Society’s evening course for book-keepers were ex pupil-teachers. A typical inclusion in earlier Annual Reports is illustrated by an extract from one paragraph headed ‘Apprenticeships’:

Although the necessity of *training* girls is now much more felt than formerly, the Committee cannot issue their report without earnestly insisting upon it. ... Girls leave school at 15 or 16, and remain at home ... forgetting any useful knowledge they may have acquired, and what is even worse, losing the habits of order and application which are among the best fruits of school life. All regular work is distasteful to them, but if on leaving school they commenced their training for what is to be their calling in life, the mind, accustomed to discipline, would be in a condition to receive instruction. ... (AR 1877:16)

It may well have been taken for granted that women like those running SPEW would think it natural to make decisions for such girls. Miss King, as well as other Committee members, frequently offered advice alongside the financial aid which had been requested – indeed, King appeared to believe that it was part of her official duties to do so - and the applicants seemed to accept that it was ‘right and proper’ for this to happen. From a twenty-first century perspective the girls’ reactions seem very docile; their letters of thanks express apparently genuine gratitude for being so advised.¹²⁴ Rarely do the Minutes record examples where an applicant goes against Committee advice – the case of a widow, Mrs Irwin, is one of the few – and many seem very receptive to alternative suggestions. Mrs Irwin, the widow of a sea captain, persisted for some months in her attempts to persuade the Society to extend a loan to her for the purchase of a typewriter, and would not be dissuaded by their arguments that she was not likely to be able to support her family as a typist since she ‘*suffers from rheumatism in her hands and from an injury received many years ago [having] two fingers shorter than the rest*’ (ACM 28.3.1890). Mrs Irwin got her loan.

and subsequent reports show that she made a success of her venture, even teaching her 14-year-old son to type as a result of which he got a job in an office.¹²⁵

There are occasional indications that a refusal to extend a loan to an applicant stemmed from Committee members' bias. One optimistic art student – who had been studying for five years – wanted a £5 loan to enable her to paint a picture for exhibition at the Royal Academy, hoping thereby to

more readily get orders ... if she had exhibited. As it was considered not probable that a picture painted by her would be accepted at the Royal Academy, her work being far from good, it was resolved that it would be kinder not to lend her the money but to try to persuade her to try some other means of maintaining herself (MCM 1.3.1878).

The Minutes do not offer an update on this young woman's fate. Other examples concern the Committee's disapproval of particular training establishments or the promotion of others, and applicants were sometimes left with a choice of acquiescing to the Committee's suggestions, or perhaps having their requests for help refused. A girl who wanted to study music at a college in Dalston was told she could have the loan, but was asked to consider studying '*at the Guildhall School, or at Trinity College ... [as] a small suburban school might not be good and would have no sort of standing in the musical profession*' (CABMF 10.1.1902, GCIP SPTW 1/9). Unfortunately, the Minutes do not indicate which she chose.

During the 1870s the Annual Reports to members demonstrate an increasing proclivity on the part of the Society to issue 'advice' alongside details of the year's activities. This practice – which seems to have been Miss King's idea – reached such proportions that the patience of those subscribers listening to the report must have become strained, since it was suggested (and subsequently acted upon) that '*advice to parents*' should be left out of these reports in future, and a separate leaflet produced instead (MCM 8.5.1874). As the 'advice' was aimed at the young women needing the loans, who would not have been present at the subscribers' meetings, this was a sensible move.

Committee members' responses to some applicants' requests occasionally veered more towards *direction* than *nannying*, however. In 1913 an attempt was made to persuade a woman, who wanted a grant to enable her to train in London as a shorthand-typist, to consider alternatives. This woman who '*knows French and German and has passed the Senior Local Examinations*' was apparently thought to be too well-qualified to train at the institution which she had selected, which '*would be only the training for an ordinary Shorthand Clerk in a shop or business*'. The recommendation was that '*at 39 Miss Hunt would be better suited to be a Matron, or the Superintendent of a Girls' Hostel*' and

the Secretary was '*desired to write*' to Miss Hunt with these suggestions (GCM 23.5.1913). On the other hand it is worth noting that the same Minute recorded that one of the Committee members had procured a new job – with shorter hours and the same salary - for a former grantee who had been '*obliged to resign her [shorthand-typist] post from ill-health*': but the Committee advised the girl to have a short rest first (*ibid.*). The women on the Committee certainly appeared to hold definite opinions regarding what and who were suitable for some types of work.

Minutes from earlier decades also occasionally carried examples of Committee members' judgmental attitudes. One unfortunate correspondent, who had asked for SPEW's support for a paper she had written concerning an insurance society, was informed '*that the Committee felt her plans to be beyond the pale of their work*' as having read it, they considered it '*very crude*' (MCM 1.4.1887).

One entry in the Minutes during the First World War offers an insight into the additional problems which some aspiring employees faced: '*Miss Hirschler had been successful in obtaining a post at the Commonwealth Bank of Australia, but it was decided later by the Manager that he could not retain her services owing to her German name*' (GCM 12.1.1916). An earlier Minute had contained the information that this young woman had been educated at St. Paul's School in London and was the daughter of a merchant who had lived in England since he was aged 17, but he had lost his income as a result of the war (GCM 12.11.1915). The Society's Honorary Secretary at this period was Mrs Constance Hoster, herself of German-Jewish parentage: this must have been a poignant entry for her to record.

Some of the Society's practices seemed to demonstrate another form of 'gatekeeping', that is, operating a protectionist policy on behalf of their protégées ('having favourites' might be another way of putting it). A situation arose involving a young woman who wished to set up a rival plan-tracing business a few doors away from her former teacher's, and who had applied for a grant from the Society. In considering this application, the Secretary had spoken to this Miss Long, whose plan-tracing office the Society had originally helped to set up for Long's predecessor, Miss Crosby.¹²⁶ Miss Long was reported to find it '*very inconvenient to have Miss Turner so near to her as some of her girls went frequently to see Miss Turner, and there was a great deal too much gossiping about her office, and about the customers for whom she was working*'. The Secretary, '*thinking that it might be possible to induce her to go further off*', had called on Miss Turner who then '*wrote very angrily withdrawing her request [for help from the Society] and stating that an MP had undertaken to call public attention to the matter, so that if the society exists for the special benefit of certain persons to the injury of others the public may know of it*' (MCM 25.1.1893).

Frustratingly for the reader, however, there are no further mentions in SPEW's documents of Miss Turner's subsequent actions.

Sometimes, the businessmen with whom the Society had made arrangements for training apprentices also displayed protectionist attitudes. The Committee had been asked to send specimens of some engravings done by the girls to an exhibition in Chicago. Mr Roberts, the master engraver, was reluctant for this to happen, because

some years ago a foreman of his had gone to New York and had also tried to induce some of the women to go over. Mr. Roberts thought that when this man saw the work they were now doing, he would repeat the attempt and unsettle the women. He thought that this would be bad for the women in every way, and it would put an end to the employment of women in England. ... [He] had no objection to the engravings which had been exhibited at Edinburgh being sent... (MCM 15.12.1892)

When the Society (by now known as SPTW) had been in existence for about seventy years, Isaac J. Pitman, the proprietor of the Marlborough Gate Secretarial College (the forerunner of the world-famous Pitman Colleges) engaged in lengthy correspondence and interviews with the Committee, attempting to persuade them to enrol 'an agreed number' of girls on his proposed Intensive Business Course, with the Society guaranteeing the payment of the training fees. The girls would then reimburse the Society in the usual way.¹²⁷

As this negotiation was taking place in the early 1930s, a time of severe economic constraint for many people, it must be assumed that Pitman was having trouble recruiting enough students whose families could afford the fees, and in this way hoped to boost his student numbers. The Committee members were initially very suspicious of Pitman's overtures, and one of them is on record as being 'strongly opposed to the scheme, and that the Society should be in any way connected with Mr. Pitman's college' (GCIP SPTW 4/9 4.3.1931). A few weeks later Pitman suggested that 'twelve girls per annum' could be the target number, but he 'would not like you to feel that you were limited down to this number or that you should feel bound to go out into the highways and hedges to reach it' (*ibid.*: 20.3.1931). The exchange of letters, and meetings, continued until June that year, by which time Pitman had succeeded in persuading the Society to sponsor students, and in September 1931 the financial arrangements for one particular student are recorded. This was in spite of a strongly-worded 'private & confidential' letter from the London & National Society for Women's Service (formerly London Society for Women's Suffrage) to SPTW, warning against the 'tendency on the part of the management of the Intensive Business Course to recommend young women desirous of entering commerce to endeavour to do so through the secretarial side of the business' and furthermore expressing their lack of conviction that 'women students will receive the best possible help

from Messrs Pitman in the very difficult process of pushing into business ... [and that] the real danger to guard against seems to be that students might be deflected into taking the secretarial course instead of the business one' (*ibid.*: 18.2.1931). This early hint of a difference in prestige between a 'business' and a 'secretarial' career route is an example of the eventual division of labour: the 'deskilling' process which is referred to in later chapters.

The archive's correspondence file also contains information relating to some of the students who later benefited from the Society's backing for Mr Pitman's training, at least one of whom was a graduate of Oxford University. Pitman's College sent regular reports to SPTW about the sponsored secretarial students, on one occasion stating that the salary offered to one girl was £3 per week – a very good salary for 1934.

The Minutes record details of many other people and organisations who interacted with the Society, indicating the strength of the loyalties which operated between them. Although 'loyalty' might be construed as 'gatekeeping', it is clear that the overriding intention of SPEW/SPTW's personnel was the maintenance of high standards, rather than a deliberate attempt to apply a protectionist policy for the benefit of their 'favourites'. Nevertheless, their support for establishments owned or run by people with whom they were connected, such as Crosby/Long's plan-tracing office, Mrs Marshall's typewriting schools, or Miss Collingridge's art classes, is well evidenced in the Minutes.¹²⁸ Constance Hoster, whilst not one of SPEW's grantees, had been given considerable help and advice by its Secretary Gertrude King at a critical stage in her early life: she was encouraged to set up in business as the proprietor of what was to become a very prestigious secretarial college. The success of her business was advanced not least, perhaps, by the steady stream of students able to afford the fees as a result of loans from SPEW.

In addition to links with SPEW relating to grantees attending her secretarial office and college, Mrs Hoster's other connection with the Society concerned the setting up in 1914 of the Educated Women's War Emergency Training Fund, to assist 'specially the many governesses, journalists and others who have been thrown out of work by the war' or had been suddenly forced to earn their own living through the war (*AR* 1916:14).¹²⁹ From May 1915 to October 1916 she organised re-training classes for such women (as book-keepers) and cajoled the City banks to take them on. She even persuaded some of these banks to 'raise the age limit to 35' and was particularly proud of the fact that many of the successful women were over forty years of age (*AR* 1916:14; and GCIP SPTW 4/1 17.5.1915).

Mrs Hoster was apparently a very hard-headed businesswoman, as evidenced by a dispute which arose between her and the proprietress of another highly-regarded secretarial college. Hoster set up a rival establishment next door to St. James's Secretarial College in the late 1920s: an action which could be construed as 'unfair competition'.¹³⁰ Another incident had occurred in 1908, when Mrs Hoster was in

dispute with the Central Employment Bureau (CEB) over her own plans to set up a loan fund rather than combine forces with the CEB – construed as a competitive move by the CEB personnel.¹³¹ Nevertheless, she was a talented, well-respected figure, who served on SPEW's Committee for 22 years (she was appointed Hon. Secretary in 1915) and at her death in 1939 merited a lengthy and celebratory obituary in *The Times* (see Appendix 23).

4.6 Respectability, Status and Social Class

As mentioned earlier in this study, the overriding imperative for Victorian society was 'respectability'. Rules governing what was considered respectable behaviour extended to all social classes, none more so than for 'gentlewomen' – those members of the non-working classes who were the original focus of SPEW's attentions. The Society's archives contain numerous references to the ways in which such attitudes impacted upon the responses of many 'genteel' women to the type of work which they would contemplate, as well as their fear of being seen to work at all (see Chapter 3, 3.1 quotation from *AR* 1875:6). Members of SPEW's committees, too, occasionally expressed opinions which indicated their class-consciousness and sometimes their prejudices, as well as making comments which, today, would be viewed as politically incorrect.

Entries in the Minutes regarding a dispute at the Portugal Street law-copying office illustrate this point. Certain complaints had been received by the Committee from learners at that office regarding the manageress's attitude, which the Secretary had investigated on behalf of the Society by contacting Maria Rye's deputy, Jane Lewin. She reported that Lewin had explained Mrs Sunter's behaviour thus: '*while believing Mrs Sunter to be a lady, and a really kind-hearted woman, Miss Lewin admitted that she was often imperious in manner, having lived for many years in the West Indies and being accustomed to black people*' (*MCM* 7.4.1876).¹³²

Another entry, twenty-odd years later, indicated that there were some misgivings about offering training support to black women. A Miss Mildred King, of Port of Spain, Trinidad, wanted help with the cost of her medical studies, but although Miss King was '*a good musician and is organist at the principal church in Port of Spain*', she '*is a lady of colour, and it is feared she would scarcely be likely to get a post in an English or Scotch Church. Her father does not bear a good reputation there but is very well off, and might allow his daughter enough for her musical studies if he chose to do so*' (*GCM* 3.11.1899).

The nineteenth century was an era supporting rigidly-stratified class locations, and the use of social 'labels' occurred naturally in conversations. Sarah Lewin, SPEW's Assistant Secretary, spent her 1876 holiday in Edinburgh, during which she visited a number of printing works where many women were employed as

compositors. Reporting back to the Committee, she noted that *'in Edinburgh, women of a lower class are employed in feeding the presses & in book-binding', and that 'the experiment of the employment of women in this trade is generally considered a success'* (MCM 13.10.1876). One might speculate how far the women carrying out this work considered it as much of a privilege as the middle-class girls writing to SPEW in gratitude for being helped into entrepreneurial ventures. Dyhouse has reminded her readers that in the early years of the twentieth century the social divisions between middle- and working-class women meant that the two classes held very different attitudes towards work outside the home. For the former, work was 'conceived of as a right, or a privilege; whereas lower down the social scale women might identify their very source of oppression ... as the dual burden of housekeeping and paid labour' (Dyhouse 1989:137).

One of SPEW's long-serving and loyal members of the Committee, the Hon. Mrs Locke King, (who was a member of Queen Victoria's court) seemed to have difficulty in accepting the Society's links with the 'lower' classes.¹³³ On one occasion she sent in a letter to the Committee, requesting that the word 'women' in the title of the Society be changed to '*gentlewomen*', because '*fresh people knowing nothing [of] ... the class of women whom it is our object to benefit ... the word embraces all classes ... and the supposition ... that we include servants has to be dispelled*' (MCM 10.3.1876). The Committee members present at the meeting when this letter was received (the Hon. Maude Stanley, Jessie Boucherett, Mrs Burbury and Mrs Fitch, in addition to the Secretary Gertrude King) were '*unanimously resolved that the proposed alteration is undesirable*' (*ibid.*). Ever polite and tactful, however, they agreed to thank the Hon. Mrs Locke King for her suggestion, but explained that the Society was not able to accept it, because '*the majority of those assisted by the Society are not "Gentlewomen" and [also] the name of the Society could not be altered in any way without calling a meeting of all the Subscribers*' (*ibid.*).

This same Committee member also expressed her strong antipathy to any form of 'combination' (ie trade union) or religious affiliation. On another occasion she had written that, had she been present at the last Committee meeting,

she should have voted against the Society's being put in relation with Lady Mary Feilding's proposed Guild.¹³⁴ She had [sic] always strongly opposed the formation of guilds; her first impulse had been to withdraw from the Committee but she at last decided that her conscience would be satisfied, if she entered her protest against the decision (MCM 8.12.1876).

Mrs Locke King was, however, mistaken regarding the Guild:

The Secy was requested to tell Mrs Locke King that the Committee regret that she disapproves of their decision in reference to the Guild, that it is not in any way connected with any church party, as the name might imply, but was merely an association for the assistance of gentlewomen ... After some discussion it was resolved that the Society be put into connection with the Guild (ibid.).

The report of the first year's activities of one of SPEW's 'country' branches, the Northumberland and Durham, also made reference to the social divisions which were such a feature of nineteenth-century life:

We must gradually ... open to women ... through a regular apprenticeship, all trades and professions for which they are not physically disqualified. Let us not be mistaken. We do not expect or wish to turn factory-girls into clerks and cashiers, nor cooks and housemaids into physicians and lawyers. ... We wish to see the class of young women near to these in degree able to earn a sufficient income to live respectably, and to lay by something for the future. ... (EWJ VIII, No.46 1861a:226)

In due course, however, the twentieth-century proletarianization of white-collar work did indeed 'turn factory-girls into clerks and cashiers' (see Chapter 6).

Social class continued to be an issue regarding the eligibility of women for certain types of clerical employment for the rest of the nineteenth century. *'The United Telephone Company having resolved to employ women in the switch rooms, applied to the Society and five young women are now on trial ... The company wish to employ girls of a better class only. No special education is needed ... The wages will not exceed 15/-'* (MCM 15.10.1880). This reinforces the impression that the girls' manners, speech and general decorum were of more importance than their schooling, as such attributes would mark them out as 'ladies'.¹³⁵ There is similar evidence from the recorded history of the Prudential Assurance Company (see below).

That the new breed of office worker guarded her genteel status is graphically illustrated by a series of articles in the magazines of the Girls' Friendly Society (GFS), which were run during the 1880s.¹³⁶ The GFS did not have any formal links with SPEW, although some members of the latter's Committees including Boucherett's cousin Lady Knightley of Fawsley were prominent in the GFS (Walker 1987:173). This is a Church of England organisation which was set up in 1875 to provide clubs and meeting-places for girls working away from home, to enable them to experience friendship and recreation. Originally aimed at working-class girls, during the 1880s its scope was widened to embrace office workers, who were more likely to be from 'middle-class' homes: a situation which created problems for the women running the GFS (see below).

There was ambivalence then, as now, regarding the social classification conferred by work carried out by women, if its status differed from that of the family of origin. As Mitchell has suggested, 'the social class of young teachers created a dilemma for the GFS' especially as teachers of elementary school children were invariably recruited from a 'lower' social class than were teachers in schools for older pupils. At the GFS, elementary school teachers were insulted if put into the Member category (that is, linked with shopgirls or servants), and as a result, frequently ceased attending the functions organised for them.¹³⁷ On the other hand, at least one GFS organiser felt that the way pupil teachers behaved left much to be desired: 'It is only necessary to go once to any "Centre", where large numbers of pupil-teachers of both sexes gather for lessons, ... to realize how very much the tone of these girls needs raising' (Mitchell 1995:37 quoting GFS Conference Report 1886). Categorization of shopgirls and office workers would continue to present difficulties for Census enumerators well into the twentieth century (see Crompton and Jones 1984).

The transactions of the GFS offer many examples of their preoccupation with the issue. A paper read at its Newcastle Diocesan Conference on 13 May 1884, which was aimed at GFS officials more used to dealing with girls from the working classes, began by drawing attention to the extent to which 'business girls' needed the help of the GFS, a class which, the speaker claimed, 'are, as a rule, a difficult class to deal with, being exceedingly touchy as to what they consider their rights and privileges, and looking upon themselves as much superior to the rest of our Members'. The speaker went on to offer the society's Associates some hints on how to deal with these girls:

The first is, *never* to call them in their own hearing *young women*. They always call each other *young ladies*, their employers always speak of them as *young ladies*, and they resent the term 'young women' as much as many ladies would resent being called a *young person*. *You* need not call them *young ladies* unless you like. When once they are admitted, *Members in Business* is sufficient. And you can always speak of one of them to her companion as 'her friend', or call her by her name. But as you value your work among them, do not call them *young women*. It may seem to you a trifle, but it is a pity to let trifles stop good work. Secondly, always address them and speak of them to one another as *Miss So-and-so*. ... (*GFS AJA* June 1884:74) [italics as original]

The legacy of such conventions is reflected in the experiences of some twentieth-century office workers, as is illustrated in Chapter 6.

In other issues of the GFS magazine, there were items relating to the hostel accommodation being provided for business girls. Advice was offered to the people organising such accommodation, with warnings that the business girls were unlikely to wish to associate too closely with more lowly 'working' girls (those in domestic service, for example). Business girls 'do not want to associate with all whom they meet' (*GFS AJA* June 1884:75). Appropriate charges for the accommodation provided would also have a bearing on its acceptability to such girls: '*Do not make low charges if you wish to attract a superior class of girl*' as 'the

fear entertained by these young women [is] that by lowering of the charges ... *an inferior class of girl with whom they would not care to associate might gain admittance to the Home*' [italics as original] (*GFS AJA* July 1884:87).

This message may have been difficult to get across, as the following year yet another article pressed the point home: 'Girls in business ... ought to [be able to] turn to find companions of their own class and occupation, and ladies ready to be their friends' (*GFS AJA* February 1885:40). Nevertheless, the GFS were not to lose sight of the needs of their original members:

We ... find ... a lack of sympathy and comprehension on the part of many Associates as regards other classes of workers beyond the ranks of service. They are often repelled by the apparent coldness and pride of the shop-assistant or the clerk, or the independent, stand-off manner of the young woman at the refreshment-bar, ... We still feel ... that the higher classes – the cultured, the leisured, and the refined – have not yet acknowledged the debt which they owe to these young women in their various professions and trades, who are ministering to them just as truly as if they were serving them in their own homes, who are working at the adornment of their persons ..., standing long hours to provide their purchases, sending out their letters, ... teaching in their schools. Surely we have *not* yet acknowledged what we owe to these, the toilers of English womanhood, much less are we ready to pay. (*GFS AJA* June 1885:92)

The GFS could not let the issue rest. In August 1885 a paper was offered at another conference, in which the speaker gave a lengthy address on the same subject (that is, the integration of 'business' girls into the society). The speech was almost littered with phrases such as 'girls of a lower rank than themselves'; 'the better sort of girls'; 'the promotion of refinement of mind and morals'; 'girls of this class'; 'the better social position'; 'the various grades of English society require so much tact and temper to manage them'. The point of integrating 'upper and middle-class Members to join' was made more explicit: 'When they [*ie* girls working in business] see that the stigma which some of them imagine is placed upon their social grade is thus abrogated by the fact of having fellow-Members who are not obliged to work for their living, it seems to me that a great difficulty would be taken away from us in setting the matter before them.' (*GFS AJA* August 1885:117-118).

The widespread prejudice against the idea of middle-class women being paid for their labours, discussed in Chapter 3, was nevertheless gradually being eroded as the nineteenth century drew to its close. The Society's Minutes recorded this shift:

Another difficulty with which the Committee had to contend in the early days of the Society has vanished. Forty years ago a gentlewoman thought she lost caste among her fellows if she had to seek work

outside her home in order to earn her own living, and if obliged to do so she used every contrivance to conceal the fact. Now every sensible woman is ready to seek work openly, and she does to the best of her ability that which she undertakes. (*AR* 1901:7)

The emphasis on an 'appropriate' social status from which female white-collar workers would be drawn prevailed for many decades. The Board of Directors of the Prudential Assurance Company, whilst having the distinction of being the first insurance company to employ women clerks, passed a resolution in 1872 which indicated that the social status of the 'Lady Clerks' formed a great element in the success of the system. In tracing the history of this company, one writer has noted that

the company would only employ women whose male relations were officers of the army and navy, clergymen, bankers, merchants, wholesale dealers, members of the stock exchange, professional men (viz 'medical men'), lawyers, artists and 'purely literary men', managers, secretaries and chief officials of companies, clerks in the Houses of Parliament, and 'any exceptional cases in harmony with the above principle to be considered by the Board'. (Jordan 1996:66)

As will be demonstrated in Chapter 6, a later generation of women experienced a very similar economic, cultural and social framework.¹³⁸

4.7 The Turn of the Century: A Shift in Emphasis

The year 1905 saw the death of the Society's founder, Jessie Boucherett. As the need for creating new openings in employment for women diminished, so the Society's activities had gradually centred more and more on granting loans to help women to pay for commercially- or Government-provided training courses (and these loans were, as always, interest-free). The Society's income had never been large, and regeneration of loan funds was dependent upon individual repayment rates which, as was mentioned above, might span many decades. SPEW's loan funds were systematised in 1897, as a result of the Charity Commissioners' requirements, and an entry in the 1909 Annual Report illustrates the gap between repayments and amounts advanced each year (Table 4.2).¹³⁹

Naturally, the Society was unable to lend the whole of its income, as overheads and salaries had to be taken into account (Table 4.1, above, gave representative examples of total income). The Council of the C & G Institute had been an important additional source of assistance to applicants who approached the Society for help with training in artistic or scientific fields between the years 1881 and 1895: they had advanced £1,025 in that period, distributed between forty-two girls who had been 'screened' and subsequently recommended by the Society.

TABLE 4.2
Examples of Interest-Free Loans Granted, and Levels of Repayments,
1897-1909

Source: *AR* 1910:10

Year	Loans Granted	Repayments
	£ s. d.	£ s. d.
1897	117 6 0	81 4 6
1898	102 16 0	52 5 6
1899	125 8 0	77 18 10
1900	272 7 6	121 1 4
1901	286 9 4	165 18 6
1902	258 14 4	157 17 6
1903	253 10 3	148 13 0
1904	339 19 11	146 10 6
1905	382 15 6	235 17 6
1906	427 0 4	283 14 3
1907	402 14 0	301 10 9
1908	398 8 4	353 1 9
1909	445 12 4	392 2 2

By the turn of the century, too, the type of training for which loans were being granted had altered, and the records indicate that with the changes which had taken place in the educational system, especially women's higher education opportunities, there had been a move away from *trades*, and towards the professions such as secondary school teaching and a range of medical studies, in addition to factory inspecting, dispensing, horticulture and librarianship, as well as secretarial training. Such applications outweighed the craft-based industries which had featured in the Minutes of the 1870s and 1880s. Nevertheless, as one Annual Report put it, 'the Committee consider that the power of helping applicants to get technical training is by far the most useful branch of their work ... [therefore] they would earnestly appeal for subscriptions or donations to these loan training funds' (*AR* 1906:8). There were at this stage four accounts set up in memory of women connected with the Society, from which these loans were made: the Pfeiffer, the Caroline Ashurst Biggs, the Mrs Haweis, and the Helen Blackburn Funds. Each of the women commemorated by these loan funds had interesting - and sometimes influential - lives. Only two of them had served on SPEW's Committees (Biggs and Blackburn).¹⁴⁰ The Haweis Fund's connection is outlined in Appendix 6. The Pfeiffer Fund was set up after Mr Pfeiffer 'who [for many years] had taken a great interest in the Society' had bequeathed 'a large portion of his property ... on behalf of women, and women solcly' in his will (*MCM* 6.4.1894). The Society received £2,000 as a result of this, which they 'applied to the endowment of Studentships, called the Pfeiffer Studentships, for the technical education of women' (*GCM* 20.4.1894). Appendix 5 details the women commemorated by individual memorial funds.

The Society continued for some years to maintain its 'employment Register' which had operated since 1859 and it published information annually regarding the numbers placed in various categories of work. An early report had noted that

many of the applicants are ladies of 40 years of age and upwards, some being even over 60, who are now for the first time compelled to work for their own maintenance. These are, for the most part, totally untrained for anything, and are eligible for few situations. ... Some of the applicants are half-educated girls of 20 or 25, who are unwilling to submit to the drudgery of learning a business, and want something 'gentle' or 'not menial'. ... (AR 1868:10-11)

In 1878, the Society had noted that 'though other Societies with similar objects have come into being within the last ten years, it retains its distinctive features ... and ... is the only Society which keeps a free register for all women except domestic servants...' (AR 1878); but by 1905 it was aware that many other similar employment agencies existed (although SPEW was still the only one not charging a fee) and that

advertising has become so general that a woman who holds good certificates and diplomas can generally get an engagement through advertisement, or she will be recommended by those under whom she was trained. Nevertheless, the Committee are always glad to hear of vacancies for their applicants. ... Many ... temporary workers, whose names have been long on the books, have formed such good connections through the introduction of the Society that they have as much work as they can undertake without further reference to the office. This is specially the case with writers, needlewomen and waitresses... (AR 1906:16-17).

This chapter has illustrated that SPEW's records bear witness to the hard work and commitment which characterised the pioneering activities of its members, especially during the nineteenth century. The men and women who served on its Committees (never more than twenty-four at a time, often far fewer) were prepared to attend meetings held at least once a month, and more often fortnightly, and to work on its behalf in between meetings by lobbying, networking, and by attending to various commitments undertaken as a result of those meetings. Many served the Committee from the time they joined, until their deaths. Although in its first decades the Committee included many men, as time passed the balance shifted so that by the turn of the century male officials were in the minority. However, the Society continued to attract the support of many eminent politicians, who were prepared to petition Parliament on their behalf.

That SPEW/SPTW was a *small* Society is indisputable: its income was, even by nineteenth-century standards, minute; but that it was *effective* in facilitating women's entry to many 'new' occupations has been demonstrated here. What is remarkable is the broad range of people who were prepared to make financial contributions to it. As noted above, considerable sums were offered in the form of bequests or *in memoriam*, an indication that the Society was not only well known for its efforts on behalf of women, but

also well respected. Just as important is the number of women who contributed smaller sums, in recognition of their gratitude for the assistance offered them at the time of their own need, summed up in these typical extracts from ex-grantees: 'I should like to give a small donation to the Society, for I have received so much help and so many kindnesses from it'; another wrote 'I am always grateful to the Society, for I can never forget that I owe my first start in life to it'; and yet another recognised the contribution made by Boucherett, whose death had recently occurred: 'She had indeed done a great and noble work for women, and many of us are deeply indebted to her' (*AR* 1905:9).

The members and subscribers had made a significant contribution to 'the woman question' - by raising the public's awareness of the issues, by using their considerable influence in governmental and commercial circles, and by their personal financial donations to the Society's funds. Jessie Boucherett, in her tribute to Adelaide Procter after the latter's death in 1864, wrote that 'her exertions have contributed in no small degree towards the measure of success which has been attained' (Boucherett *EWJ* XIII, No.27 1864:21); yet without Boucherett's own determination, organisational skills, and not least her wealth, I submit that this small but significant Society would not have been 'one of the main agents ... in opening new fields of occupation for women, and thereby increasing their usefulness and - as a natural consequence - their happiness ...' (GCIP SPTW 4/1 *printed history booklet* 1879:10), let alone surviving into the twenty-first century.

The Society's claim to be 'one of the main agents' was legitimate, as is indicated by the evidence I have extracted from their archive. Examples cited in this chapter have included the significance for clerical workers of Gertrude King's appearance before the Royal Commission in 1874, which directly resulted in an increase in the number of women employed as Civil Servants (see section 4.3), and also the number of occasions on which the Society was consulted as a main source of information and advice when 'careers guides' were being prepared (for example Grogan 1883; Davidson 1894).

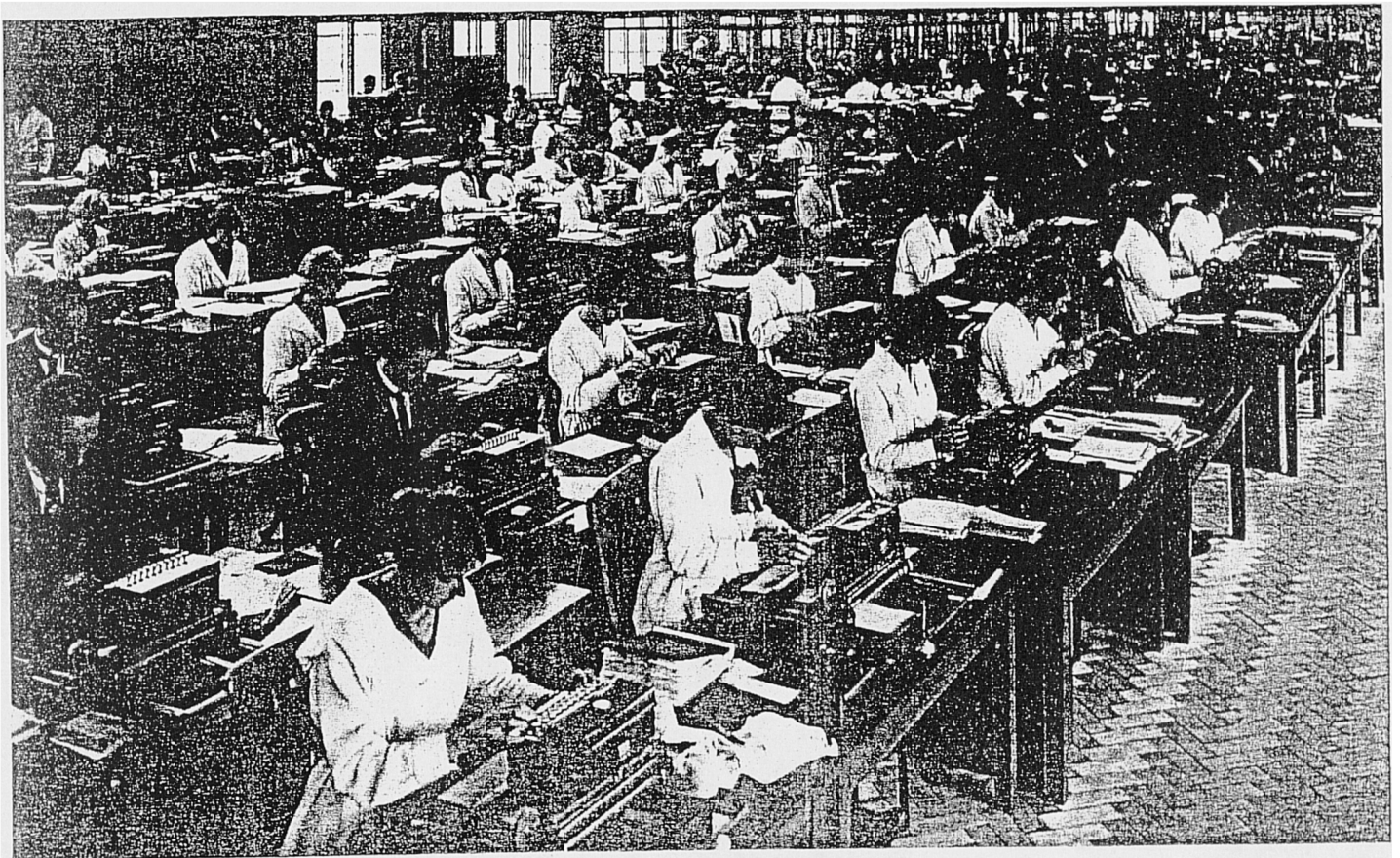
SPEW's activities in providing training for women as book-keepers, clerks, shorthand writers or typists exponentially increased the numbers of women receiving such training (and numbers continued to multiply as many of those trainees subsequently set up their own 'schools' or 'offices' in London and elsewhere in the country). In addition, the Society's insistence on high standards from its 'sponsored' employees meant that more employers were willing to open jobs to women (see for example Chapter 5, section 5.5, and its sub-sections).

Further examples are set out in the next chapter, which outlines the ways in which the various branches of clerical work were gradually monopolised by women, a process which was followed by rapid proletarianization and concomitant loss of status for such workers. Technological advances, not least typewriting (which was quickly recognised as a very 'suitable' job for a woman) contributed to these changes in no small measure.

ILLUSTRATION 4.2

A 1920s General Office – Messrs Cadbury

(Delgado 1979:47)



CHAPTER FIVE

WOMEN AS CLERICAL WORKERS, 1850-1950

'Type-writing is doing much, and will do more, towards the problem of finding suitable employment for ladies' (*Girls' Own Paper* 11.8.1888:745)

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I give a precise account of SPEW's rôle in the furtherance of women's entry into clerical occupations as well as an overview of the main categories of office employment which emerged during the period covered by my thesis. The second half of the nineteenth century saw an expansion in the demand for clerical workers, and women were able to grasp opportunities to engage in such work for the first time. The activities of SPEW's members paved the way for this, as they pioneered the provision of training for women in book-keeping, law copying, plan tracing and in shorthand, as well as facilitating the training of some of the earlier 'lady type-writers'.

The chapter also draws upon historical and sociological literature in outlining the ways in which various branches of clerical work were gradually monopolised by women. This process was accompanied by an increase in the 'proletarianization' of the clerical workforce and a concomitant loss of status for such workers compared with that of the early-nineteenth-century clerk (see 5.2). Technological advances, not least the advent of the typewriter (quickly recognised as constituting 'a very suitable job for a woman') contributed in no small measure to these changes.

The term 'white-collar employment' which is used in this chapter denotes work which is generally carried out within an office environment, compared with 'blue-collar' manual labour, and the term is used synonymously with 'clerical work' or 'office work'.

The main divisions into which white-collar employment evolved during the second half of the nineteenth century, such as book-keeping, law-copying, stenography, typewriting, telecommunications and the civil service, quickly became magnets for women. For much of that time such paid employment constituted a 'life-saving' means of subsistence for many middle- and upper-working-class women. But it was not merely those thousands of women who *needed* to be self-supporting who were glad of this work. Paid employment provided not only independence, but mental stimulation for many others, and reflected the

beliefs of those first ‘Langham Place’ feminists, who frequently drew attention to the fact that women *wished* for mental and physical activities which would stimulate, not stultify, them:

Young women begin to ask at the age of sixteen or seventeen, ‘What am I created for? Of what use am I to be in the world?’ ... If a girl has a religious or an inquiring mind, she will be much dissatisfied with [the] answer [‘your use is to bear children’]. ... Work – not drudgery, but WORK – is the great beautifier. Activity of brain, heart, and limb, gives health and beauty, and makes women fit to be the mothers of children. A listless, idle, empty-brained, empty-hearted, ugly woman has no right to bear children. ... Women *do* want work, and girls must be trained for professions. ... (Smith [Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon] 1857:7-8; 18-19).

The mushrooming of commercial opportunity, and the concomitant development of office mechanisation, also played their parts in the ‘lone’ nineteenth-century (male) clerk’s metamorphosis into the female-dominated clerical industry of the twentieth century. In Great Britain by 1951, 60 per cent of all clerical workers were female (Lockwood 1958:36; Perkin 1993:243); by that date white-collar employment encompassed 31 per cent of Great Britain’s occupied population (Halsey 1972:113, Table 4.1) and it continued to expand throughout the twentieth century, beyond the period covered here. In the middle of the nineteenth century, according to the census of 1851, there had been only 43,741 commercial clerks, constituting 0.8 per cent of the total labour force, and the vast majority of those were male. A mere nineteen women accounted for 0.1 per cent of that figure (Holcombe 1973:210). Put another way, the number of male clerks multiplied seven times between 1851 and 1911, whilst the number of females in similar jobs increased eighty-three times (Zimmeck 1986:154). By that last date, too, men had realised that the ‘new’ careers which were opening up for them offered better opportunities for advancement. Positions as cost accountants, office managers, commercial travellers and salesmen were more attractive than the ‘feminised’ rôle of clerk or typist (Davy 1986:126).

5.2 The Nature and Origins of Clerical Work

There is very little first-hand evidence about the nature of office work prior to the middle of the nineteenth century. Much of the available evidence regarding the clerk’s duties and working conditions relies on literature: Dickens’s Bob Cratchit, for example, who ‘represented a now extinct breed – the educated aspiring young man, more than a servant, not quite an equal, the right arm of a wealthy gentleman’ (Tilly and Scott 1978:157). That the typical counting-house office was small may be assumed: the clerk’s tasks consisted of seeing to the correspondence, filing, routine office duties, and entering financial transactions into the books. David Lockwood’s seminal study of the social status of clerks notes that evidence relating to the conditions in which clerks worked in the mid-nineteenth century is meagre: Lockwood himself relied on contemporary novels, or pamphlets, in attempting to build ‘a picture of the office, the status, prospects and remuneration of the clerk’ (Lockwood 1958:19). His study, incidentally, barely addresses the issue of

female clerks, whom he writes off as ‘the white bloused worker’, forming a sort of clerical anticlimax: ‘It is a far cry from the blackcoated male careerist of the counting house, whose aspirations and successes helped to confer the substance of prestige on the occupation, to the routine girl clerk or typist of the modern office, whose future status depends less on her own career than on that of the man she ultimately marries’ (Lockwood 1958:125). Yet at the time he was writing, women constituted 60 per cent of the clerks employed in this country.

The *nature* of clerking varied little throughout the nineteenth century, even if the content of clerks’ ledgers differed from business to business: whether in commercial or in government offices ‘Bob Cratchit’s high stool, quill pen, and correspondence spike’ were the recognisable equipment (Zimmeck 1986:154). In the Civil Service, for example, clerks’ functions during that century were concerned with accounting, dealing with legal documents, and preparing correspondence (Craig 1955). In commercial offices and counting-houses, clerks were employed in record-keeping, in book-keeping, and in handling correspondence as well as, when appropriate, receiving the employers’ clients. As separate categories of office work appeared, such as the use of shorthand, the appendage ‘clerk’ was always added to the description of the work (eg short-hand clerk; book-keeping clerk). Male clerks served lengthy ‘apprenticeships’, always hoping to become either the administrator or the owner of a business in their own right (and they were often the sons of the businessman). Whilst in reality many clerks remained in the service of one employer for life, nevertheless the rôle was seen as a stepping-stone:

[The position of clerk] is only a state of preparation, ... to enable him to fill it with credit and advantage, he must learn the elements of business; and therefore he is placed as a clerk at the desk, but only temporarily, till he can undertake the management of the same business in its higher departments. With such a man clerkship is, in fact, only another school, and he does not enter his school till he is supposed to have acquired that degree of knowledge which is essential to support the character of a gentleman and a man of property. (Lockwood 1958:25, citing *Houlston’s Industrial Library* 1878:49)

As well as having credentials as gentlemen, aspiring clerks were expected to have had an extensive education, a ‘tradition’ which carried over to those women who began to be employed in similar rôles. Those hoping to embark on a clerical career would, according to one publication outlining the clerk’s ‘duties and discipline’, find it sufficient to have ‘a little instruction in Latin, and probably a very little in Greek, a little in Geography, a little in Science, a little in arithmetic and book-keeping, a little in French’ as well as ‘such a sprinkling of English reading as may enable a lad to distinguish Milton from Shakespeare’ which would be considered enough preparation ‘for aught that may turn up in the way of employment’ (Lockwood *ibid.*1958:20). The social prestige attached to the rôle of clerk was sufficient to make it a sought-after profession; and the thought of possible advancement

continued to spur energies and imagination in an individualistic direction. If economically [clerks] were sometimes on the margin, socially they were definitely a part of the middle class. ... [however]... we see evidence of extensive nepotism in the more lucrative appointments and promotions, of clerks offering their services in return for experience or token salaries, of masters taking advantage of the over-supply of the market to pay their clerks less than it took to marry and maintain a respectable family (Lockwood 1958:35).

That similar accomplishments were also required of women is illustrated not only by the emphasis SPEW put on the appropriateness of the education of the girls they were placing, but also in the magazine articles which began to proliferate in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. There is *always* mention of the need to speak other European languages; of a knowledge of Geography; of exemplary grammar and spelling; and, in at least one report, 'she must write a really clear and legible round hand (avoiding anything like a flourish, first, as vulgar, next, as confusing to the reader) and if possible she will learn to write with either hand, ...[thus avoiding] that truly terrible affliction, "writer's cramp"...' (*The Young Woman* 1892-1893:262-3).

Clerking began to lose its exclusively male orientation after the middle of the nineteenth century, as well as some of its appeal for young men. The growth of joint-stock companies, as well as the expansion of foreign trade, meant that the size of businesses increased, and it was far less likely that an 'apprentice' clerk could aspire to an ownership or top management rôle in a business. Communications improved greatly, and inventions which served these followed thick and fast. Not only were the telegraph, telephone and postal systems expanding, but aids to word- and number-processing also proliferated (carbon paper, adding machines, stencil duplicators, card indexes, filing systems and so on), thereby increasing the demand for operators.

The Civil Service, which had been another all-male enclave, was undergoing rapid expansion at this time and the iniquitous patronage system was gradually being phased out, finally being replaced by competitive entry in 1870. 'The idea of untrammelled competition by scholastic ability for Government triumphed at last in an Order in Council which was put through on 4th June, 1870, by that tempestuous Chancellor of the Exchequer, ... Robert Lowe' (Craig 1955:188). Nevertheless, it took some time for an 'unofficial' patronage system to be replaced by truly competitive entry.

In contrast with the dearth of detail on the day-to-day work of the early nineteenth-century clerk, information relating to the rôle in the latter decades of that century is a little more extensive. Publications began to appear after the 1860s offering employment information to women; and the archives of the larger employers, such as the Prudential Assurance Company, the biscuit manufacturers Huntley and Palmers, and the Civil Service, also furnish evidence of the work in which employees were engaged. Craig's history of the Civil Service offers additional perceptions into the ways in which women were eventually absorbed into

its clerical grades (Craig 1955); and the autobiography of one pioneering woman offers further insights into the type of women being recruited to such posts during the latter years of the nineteenth century (Courtney 1926). Not least, the archive of SPEW provides a contemporary snapshot of the experiences of many women clerks, an opportunity which goes some way to offsetting the regret felt by historians that 'nineteenth-century women clerks are, unfortunately, beyond the reach of the questionnaire and the gimlet eye of the participant observer' (Zimmeck 1986:156).

The popularity of clerkships amongst women may be ascertained from the quantity of articles appearing in magazines aimed at women in the 1880s and 1890s. Many late-century publications outlined the duties of the clerk, and the attributes which should be possessed by those young women aspiring to the rôle. In one such article, the writer stressed that success would depend more 'on what she *is* than on what she *knows*'; intelligence, accuracy and punctuality were singled out as the most important of her attributes. The article emphasised the subservient rôle of the female clerk: 'The lady clerk must learn *to do exactly what she is told*, whether she understand it or no – whether explained or left dark ... she must learn to *work in silence*, ... to be scrupulously courteous ...' and in order to enjoy the 'dignified and worthy pride of being independent and self-supporting ...' she should be 'a speedy and correct shorthand writer, and able to transcribe on the typewriter ...'. Other 'acquirement(s) of great value' were French, 'because it is so largely used as a medium between foreign buyers and sellers' and 'Spanish ... because so much business is done between this country and the South American States...' [italics as original]. (*The Young Woman* 1892-1893:262-3)

TABLE 5.1
Number of Clerks Employed
in England and Wales, 1861-1911^(a)
(Holcombe 1973:210)

Year	Men			Women	
	All clerks Employed	Number	% of All Clerks Employed	Number	% of all Clerks Employed
1861	92,012	91,733	99.7	279	0.3
1871 ^(b)	130,717	129,271	98.9	1,446	1.1
1881 ^(c)	236,125	229,705	97.3	6,420	2.7
1891	370,433	351,486	94.9	18,947	5.1
1901	518,900	461,164	88.9	57,736	11.1
1911	685,998	561,155	81.9	124,843	18.1

^(a) Includes those returned as commercial or business clerks; law clerks; bankers, bank officials, clerks; insurance officials, clerks; and railway officials, clerks

^(b) Figures for 1871 do not include law clerks, for whom no separate figure was given in the census tables

^(c) Figures for 1881 do not include railway officials and clerks, for whom no separate figure was given in the census tables

Statistics relating to the clerical employment of women have been represented in various ways in different census returns, so as a supplement to the above information provided by Holcombe, I have included Table 5.2, which is an extract from Halsey (*ed.* 1972), showing the number of female clerks between 1911 and 1951 (there was no official census in 1941 as a result of the Second World War).

TABLE 5.2
The Percentage of Female Workers in Major Occupational Groups in Great Britain, 1911-1966
(selected)
 (Halsey (ed) 1972:114 Table 4.3)

Occupational Group	1911	1921	1931	1951
White-Collar Workers	29.8	37.6	35.8	42.3
(a) Managers & Administrators	19.8	17.0	13.0	15.2
(b) Higher professionals	6.0	5.1	7.5	8.3
(c) Lower professionals & technicians	62.9	59.4	58.8	53.5
(d) Foremen and Inspectors	4.2	6.5	8.7	13.4
s	21.4			
(f) Salesmen and Shop Assistants	35.2	43.6	37.2	51.6
Total Occupied Population	29.6	29.5	29.8	30.8

The effects on the social status of clerks of the shift from an all-male to a female-dominated profession are given further attention below (see section 5.4).

5.3 Working Conditions

For many years employers of clerical labour were at pains to separate female employees from their male workforce. Propriety required that unrelated middle-class males and females should be segregated except when formally chaperoned: the workplace was thought to offer unheard-of (and apparently unwelcome) opportunities for fraternisation unless the sexes were separated during working hours. One common excuse given for not employing women in offices, therefore, was that the Victorian male, believing that woman's task was to find a husband, felt that her interest in a job

could only be temporary; she would use her position to help her in her search for a husband. As one historian put it, women in business offices were a danger, therefore, to the young unmarried men there who might be tempted to marry below them, and a danger to the married men who might be tempted to flirt with them (Burstyn 1980:130).

An 1859 *Journal* article which advocated the entry of women into Government service was careful to add the caveat 'As ... it would not answer to mix up clerks of both sexes, there should of course be apartments

for each' to its suggestion that there were several departments where young women might be employed as clerks (*EWJ* III, No.13 1859:39).¹⁴¹ Firms such as the Electric and International Telegraph Company, which claimed to have done much for 'the cause of female labour', nevertheless went to great lengths to keep their workforce segregated by sex, as was reported in the *Illustrated London News (ILN)*: 'The male and female telegraphists have separate stair-cases ... that for the men leads from the principal staircase. The female clerks have a private staircase, leading ... to the street door of the premises [and] ... to a dining-hall and cloak-room, which are provided exclusively for them' (*ILN* 31.12.1859:649). Typists at the Treasury were kept in a room 'at the top of the House', and their entrances and exits were made through the main hallways in convoy under the supervision of the head of the Registry, according to Zimmeck (1986:160). She adds that 'in pursuit of a low profile for women many employers did not permit women to leave the premises at lunchtime. Women at the Post Office only secured liberty and fresh air in 1911 after a strenuous campaign and personal appeals to the Postmaster General' (Zimmeck *ibid.*). This rule had a practical basis, since most offices were in the City, and there were no places for the women to go to in that area for example cloakrooms or eating-houses. In spite of a more 'modern' approach to the mixing of the sexes during the twentieth century, however, one of the women who had worked in the Civil Service in 1938, who contributes evidence to Chapter 6 of this study, remarked that '*there was no fraternising with the "other sex" - we just passed them on our way to and from the front door*' (Mrs GG, b.1921).

The Bank of England was amongst the many organisations which ensured that female staff emanated from appropriate backgrounds. One of its earliest women employees (born in 1865) explained that 'women in ordinary banks were unheard of, and their introduction into the Bank of England, of all places, caused a mild sensation...' (Courtney 1926:153). The Bank recruited 'the rank and file from the daughters of professional men, with the necessary sprinkling (one in four) of Bank clerks' daughters. That degree of provision for the families of its staff had always been amongst the Bank's traditions' (Courtney *ibid.*:154). Courtney herself, as an Oxford-educated clergyman's daughter, was appointed during the 1890s to be the Bank's first female superintendent of women clerks. Although she clearly made a success of this job, as with the others she held, she wrote

I say unhesitatingly that clerical work for women ... when I was first adventuring into the business world, was a soul-destroying avocation, from which any woman, let alone a woman of higher education, might well pray to be delivered. Yet no prospect for his daughter was then so attractive to the middle-class parent, or indeed to some parents who should have known better, than 'Government Service'. It is so still (Courtney 1926:138-9).

And it remained 'so', well into the twentieth century, as is confirmed by reports from my informants in Chapter 6. As elsewhere, women clerks employed by the Bank of England had no career ladder to climb: indeed, the only 'outlet' for them was to qualify as a typist, where in addition to receiving slightly higher

wages, they had a little more variety in the work on which they were engaged. This innovation, however, was not without its problems. Courtney reported that

this new departure [in the mid-1890s] was not made without serious misgivings. What might it not lead to in the way of closer contact between the sexes? Up to then no woman clerk had entered the other parts of the Bank except myself as Superintendent, and I only went ... when I was summoned. It was, therefore, decreed that all communication with the typists should be through two carefully selected male clerks (Courtney *ibid.*:163)

5.4 Clerical Opportunities for Women: False Hopes of Equality?

The early promise of a career structure comparable to that available for men, which clerical work had appeared to offer to women during the latter decades of the nineteenth century, was not borne out by subsequent events. It soon became obvious that what had begun as exciting new fields of employment simply offered further ways in which women were subjugated into secondary rôles, with unequal pay.

As noted above, women were recruited into the nationally-expanding clerical field at a proportionately faster rate than men, for whom there were many competing alternatives. 'From very small beginnings in 1881 women had by 1911 increased their share of the commercial and civil service workforces by up to 25 per cent or more' (Anderson 1988:3); in actual figures, from 6,420 female clerks in 1881 to almost 125,000 in 1911 (Holcombe 1973:210). As this process unfolded, a marked sexual division of labour emerged. Women did not at first recognise that the office world they were entering would not offer them the same career progression as had been taken for granted by previous generations of male clerks: indeed, it may be safely assumed that the earliest women white-collar workers were unlikely to *aspire* to such career paths. It would take many years – and two world wars – before it became obvious that *no* real career ladder existed beyond, for example, the posts of office supervisor or personal secretary (Crompton and Jones 1984), even supposing such a ladder was sought. 'Most women remained at low-paying jobs for the duration of their employment; opportunities for promotion were few. ... As older sectors of female employment declined, new "female" jobs emerged' (Tilly and Scott 1978). Furthermore, the *status* of clerical work was not maintained at its nineteenth-century level, a situation which is examined further in subsequent chapters.

In the Civil Service during the early years of the twentieth century women were formally barred from the same promotion routes as men: women's clerical and typing grades 'were "watertight compartments", strictly separate and distinct from comparable men's grades. As a result, women could not obtain promotion to higher grades of the service like men but were restricted to the supervisory classes within their own grades' (Holcombe 1973:176). The Bank of England operated the same system. Courtney (quoted above), who prior to joining the Bank had been one of the first female Civil Servants - a translation

clerk with the Royal Commission on Labour - credits the Commission's Secretary, Geoffrey Drage, with the appointment of women to such a post; and the Treasury's lack of objection because 'even then women were much cheaper' (Courtney 1926:136). She added:

Sir George Murray, in evidence before the Royal Commission on the Civil Service, which reported about a year before the War [*the First World War*], said quite simply, in answer to a question as to his views on the rates of pay for women, 'I should say that you had better get them as cheaply as you can.' And when he was further asked whether, if they were doing the same work as men, they ought not to be paid at the same rate, he answered, 'No, I think not, if you can get them for less.' (Courtney 1926:136).

This point of view had changed little in over forty years, and was to pertain for many more. Nevertheless, by the end of the nineteenth century, acceptance that many middle-class women *would* pursue careers in commerce, as well as in the professions such as education, medicine, nursing or pharmacy had become more widespread: but it was generally only the *unmarried* woman who would do so. The ideal of married women remaining in the home – the legacy of 'the Angel in the House' - took much longer to dislodge (Burstyn 1980:131).¹⁴²

The replacement of dozens of small businesses by large-scale amalgamations and the growth of joint-stock companies which occurred during Victoria's reign contributed to an upsurge in the demand for clerical workers, who were needed to handle the resultant proliferation of correspondence and record-keeping. At this time, too, technological advances were creating further demands for skilled operators: telegraphists, typists, and operators of a range of other office equipment. Whilst occasionally a merger between two organisations or institutions might result in a *reduction* in the volume of written communications, such as was expected between certain departments in the Civil Service (eg when the Board of Ordnance merged with the War Office in 1870), overall the volume of paperwork and the resulting demand for clerical workers continued to expand.¹⁴³ The census returns for 1861 indicate that at that time there were 92,012 clerks in Britain, more than twice the number of a decade earlier; and although the number of women had increased, the 279 women listed in the returns still constituted only 0.3 per cent of the total. By 1891 the number of clerks had leapt to 370,433 including nearly 19,000 women (see 5.1); and at the end of the century there were 518,900, of whom 11 per cent (57,736) were women (Holcombe 1973:210).

This expansion in demand meant that more doors were *potentially* open to women, but the pioneering feminists such as those in the Langham Place circle, for example, recognised that if women were to be encouraged to put themselves forward for such avocations they would need a great deal of encouragement and support. In an unattributed article in the *EWJ* published during the same year in which SPEW was founded, the writer begged women to 'cultivate their understanding, and put forward their thoughts for the benefit of the public, ... [and to] direct their efforts to the improvement of their own sex'. The author

(probably Parkes, as previously mentioned) was careful to stress that although they would need to 'be bold and resolute', they would 'never overstep the gentleness, reserve, refinement, and delicacy, for which in all ages and countries women have obtained credit' in order to 'obtain the full approbation of men' (*EIWJ* III, No.13 1859:43). Perhaps it was this reluctance to appear 'unladylike' which prevented women from making more strident demands for equal pay.

The number of women white-collar workers might have increased substantially by the end of the nineteenth century, but whether the 'promise' which clerical work seemed to offer for women was indeed fulfilled is a matter for further discussion in Chapter 6, when the process by which clerking became delineated between *intellectual* work (done by men) and *mechanical* work (done by women) is examined more fully.

5.5 SPEW's Contribution to White-Collar Employment

As was indicated in the introduction to this chapter, SPEW's archives will again be cited as a primary source of information in the following sub-sections. Many of these contain illustrations regarding the ways in which Society was at times the initiator and at other times one of the earliest pioneers in facilitating women's entry into various branches of white-collar employment. Its impact on women's acceptance into the Civil Service as post office clerks, as telephonists and telegraphists, as well as in negotiating for women to act as markers of Civil Service examination papers, is set out in relevant sub-sections below (and previous chapters have contained additional information relating to these activities). SPEW's 'typing bureau' (its 'office') and its employment Register provided additional means by which the Society was able to assist women into a broad range of white-collar work. Not least, it was the Society's initiatives in setting up classes and 'agencies' for book-keeping, law- and plan-copying, printing, shorthand and even banking which enabled many women to enter these areas of employment. They saw to it that their efforts were publicised through journals and other printed publications, through circular letters to potential employers, and through personal contacts, in attempts to keep their work in the public eye (and to attract further financial support for their activities).

One important aspect of clerical work which meant that it was so acceptable to the Committee of SPEW as a job for women was that it did not cause the loss 'of those feminine graces, of dignity, of delicacy, of reserve, which are the essential characteristics of an English gentlewoman' (Zimmeck 1986:158). Moreover, it was clean, dainty, allowed women to dress nicely, and 'could be organized so as to limit contact with social inferiors and with men. It did not disqualify those poor women who otherwise possessed the full complement of allurements from making a decent match' (Zimmeck *ibid.*, quoting Lady John Manners).¹⁴⁴

The members of SPEW also recognised that in clerical work, women had golden opportunities to engage in activities well suited to their capabilities (such as neatness and attention to detail with written work, not requiring great physical strength), and as many of the required tasks were newly created, the criticism could not be levelled that they were taking work away from the main breadwinners – men. This was an important consideration, as much of the public debate about women’s work centred on that issue. Not all SPEW’s Committee members (men or women) were supporters of the wave of feminism gathering strength during the second half of the nineteenth century, and there was thus a potential for conflict within the Society. However, the Minutes offer no evidence of major disagreements, and where individuals are on record as presenting different viewpoints, full discussion invariably followed and eventually a majority decision would prevail. All members continued to be committed to the Society’s central *raison d’être*, which was to stimulate women to broaden the fields in which they would be able to become financially self-sufficient.

The Society’s own administrative arrangements provided employment for some of the young women approaching them, for example when copies of letters or memorials were needed for circulation to a number of people, ‘the office’ was given the tasks (see Illustration 4.1). The Secretary was also constantly on the look-out for opportunities for those on their employment Register to earn money addressing envelopes: for example ‘*As the School Board elections are approaching it was resolved that some of the lady candidates be asked whether they would send to the office any addressing which they might require to be done, as the register contains the names of many ladies who are anxious to get such work*’ (MCM 26.10.1882). This was apparently carried out, as the Minute a month later recorded ‘*that a considerable amount of work had been done at the office in connection with the School Board Elections*’ (MCM 24.11.1882). In 1887 mention was made of some recent writing work of 100 petitions for the Moral Reform Society; ‘*200 pamphlets addressed, folded and stamped for the Rev. J. Johnson of Upper Norwood, and about 15,000 addressed written for the Propaganda Society*’ (MCM 1.4.1887).

In addition to the more routine tasks of addressing envelopes, the Society promoted clerical work requiring a considerable period of training, such as shorthand or typewriting. Where such training was not already available elsewhere, the Society organised courses of instruction themselves. There was no social discrimination regarding recipients for aid in a range of clerical work (if funds were available) other than financial need as well as a reassurance that applicants would be likely to benefit from the training (which of course, in the case of clerical occupations, presupposed an appropriate level of education). Girls from working-class homes as well as impoverished gentlewomen were afforded equal consideration: the degree to which an applicant could demonstrate *need* and *suitability* were the main criteria. Sometimes money was *given*, rather than or as well as, lent (for example to Susan Whippert, mentioned in Chapter 4).

The paragraphs which follow, presented alphabetically rather than chronologically, outline the main subdivisions of the range of clerical work in which women were first engaged, drawing upon SPEW's Minutes to demonstrate the rôle the Society played in facilitating women's entry into those jobs. By the twentieth century, many of these situations had begun to change, as will be seen from the experiences of the individuals whose stories are included in Chapter 6.

5.5.1 Banking Women's entry into the world of banking was very slow to occur, slower even than into insurance. There were isolated instances of a bank 'taking the plunge' by employing small numbers of women in the later years of the nineteenth century eg the Bank of England as mentioned above; but in general these institutions took much longer to appoint women than did other businesses or institutions. Some enlightened gentlemen had championed the cause as early as 1870, as these extracts from a letter to a SPEW committee member can testify:

Why ... should not women be employed in Banks and counting houses. ... You will be pleased to hear that we have in the London & County Bank¹⁴⁵, two female clerks, one at our sub-Branch at Hawkhurst in Kent, and the other at Newhaven whence we have a sub-Branch to Lewes. These ladies receive salaries, and very efficient they are. I must admit however that their appointment was the result of circumstances over which the Directors had very little control rather than the deliberate selection of the Board. At all events I shall be glad to see the principle extended. (MCM 27.7.1870, quoting letter from G E Outram)

It is clear that the banks remained reluctant to employ women in any great numbers as late as 1915, a fact illustrated by SPEW's Minutes which record Mrs Hoster's battle to have the 'retrained' book-keepers taken on by the banks during the First World War (see Chapter 4, 4.5).

Banks were also amongst the last establishments to drop the 'marriage bar'. This was a practice whereby women were expected to resign their posts on marriage. Well into the second half of the twentieth century it was still possible for girls employed under such conditions to opt for a 'lump sum' (a gratuity) when they married, in return for relinquishing their rights to a pensionable post. Many did, however, return to work in banks as non-established employees, that is, their service would not count towards an eventual pension. The Civil Service operated a similar bar as can be seen from an extract from a memorandum from J M Kempe, dated October 1894: 'It must be remembered that it is cheaper for us to get rid of the ladies in this way than to keep them on until pensioned' (Zimmeck 1986:162, quoting T1/88905S/19220/94).¹⁴⁶

5.5.2 Book-Keeping Historically, an important aspect of clerical work was the keeping of financial records, ranging from book-keeping and accounting to the recording of petty cash transactions. As noted earlier, book-keeping was recognised by SPEW's far-seeing founder, Jessie Boucherett, as an

occupation which would be eminently suited to women, if only their arithmetical proficiency could be improved upon. Prior to Boucherett's involvement other writers, for example the leader of the Langham Place Group, Barbara Bodichon, had noted that 'there are now many trades open to women with good training in bookkeeping and knowledge of some especial branch of business ... but very few young women know enough arithmetic to keep accounts correctly' (Smith 1857:15). Boucherett organised classes as soon as SPEW was launched, in order to address this problem (see Chapter 3, 3.5.1).

Training book-keepers, who subsequently found a range of suitable employments, became one of SPEW's main success stories, and led to the Society being consulted by many potential employers. SPEW's archives catalogue the large numbers of women trained through its school: by 1865, for example, they reported that average student numbers had tripled in less than five years (see Chapter 4, 4.3). Those students achieving over 75 per cent in examinations, which were conducted by a master from King's College, were awarded certification, which was no doubt an important factor in the trainees' success in achieving employment.¹⁴⁷ Eventually, the Society began to lobby for women to be admitted to the Institute of Chartered Accountants (ICA), a campaign which lasted for many decades, as the archives confirm (*GCM* 18.10.1889). Those records demonstrate that the Society was in the forefront of the long, hard campaign for women's admission to the Institute, particularly between 1895 and 1899. SPEW gained support from outside sources, too: a letter was received from a Mr Murray Brown, warning that whilst neither the Chartered nor the Incorporated Institutes of Accountants would yet admit women, the situation could be even worse as an Accountants' Bill was soon likely to be introduced into Parliament, aimed at making the profession 'closed', as was the case with solicitors, thus excluding women from the right to act as Public Accountants. He suggested that the Society should '*watch the Bill*' and get some MPs to oppose it until it was made to contain some clause in favour of the admission of women (*GCM* 28.4.1899). This incident again underlines one of the reasons for the Society's successes: many of their members, especially in the early years, were Members of Parliament – and some were leading figures in Government, such as Mr Gladstone and Lord Shaftesbury. Table 3.1 illustrates that of the ten men attending meetings in 1862, seven were politicians. There were many other MPs on the Committee, not necessarily present during the meetings detailed in Chapter 3, Table 3.1.

That book-keeping was one of the Society's most popular and successful ventures is confirmed by the figures which they published annually, until the end of the century, of the number of successful candidates sitting the examinations.¹⁴⁸ By the end of 1899 the Society had to consider discontinuing these classes once local authorities took more responsibility for 'commercial' education, often through evening courses. The *demand* for book-keepers, however, continued to be a source of satisfaction to the Society, and they noted in 1901 that 'the demand for clerks and book-keepers is much larger than that for secretaries' (*AR* 1901:11).

Book-keeping was one of the activities which enabled women to branch out into entrepreneurial ventures, with some women setting up as teachers themselves. Some ex-students were subsequently employed by SPEW to teach in the Society's classes (eg *MCM* 26.5.1882; *GCM* 18.10.1889; *GCM* 6.11.1891), and one was employed as a teacher by Miss Buss at her prestigious North London Collegiate School (*AR* 1883:12).

5.5.3 Insurance The 'industrial' (ie life assurance) branch of the insurance industry only emerged in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the consequent growth in the number and size of insurance/assurance companies resulted in an increased demand for clerks.¹⁴⁹ Nevertheless, such companies were particularly resistant to the idea of employing women. The first to break the mould was the Prudential Assurance Company, but only after one of its officials had heard of the success of the practice in the United States Government's Treasury Department. As a result of the economic argument this gentleman put to his Board, a few women were appointed to the Company in December 1871. The official's argument was that the women would cost less than male employees, and would not be likely to stay for too many years, as they would leave on marriage: replacements would be appointed at the lowest end of the scale, and so the cycle would be repeated. As Jordan has pointed out, however, this Company's decision 'seems to have been historically specific, and contingent on chance and imitation' (Jordan 1996:73). She adds that its example was followed 'only to a very limited extent' by other insurance companies and banks. According to the census of 1891, there were still only 89 women listed as bank officials and clerks by that date; and of the 579 returned as working in the insurance services, 243 were employed by the Prudential (Jordan, *ibid.*).

That company was thus an early pioneer in the employment of female clerks in Britain, albeit in small numbers. Strict selection processes were applied, firmly based on patronage, a practice which the Prudential had always followed with the appointments of their male clerks. As greater numbers of women were taken on, the strong emphasis on the 'appropriate' social status of applicants continued to be applied. A resolution of the Prudential's Board of Directors in 1872 decided that

considering that the social status of the Lady Clerks forms a great element in the success of the system, the company would only employ women whose male relations were officers of the army and navy, clergymen, bankers, merchants, wholesale dealers, members of the stock exchange, professional men (viz 'medical men'), lawyers, artists and 'purely literary men', managers, secretaries and chief officials of companies, clerks in the Houses of Parliament, and 'any exceptional cases in harmony with the above principle to be considered by the Board'. (Jordan 1996:66)

These 'Lady Clerks' performed a somewhat narrow range of tasks: writing out dockets seems to have been their main occupation, although some of the more experienced clerks were 'engaged in correspondence, the gist of the letter being given on a slip of paper, or noted in the corner of the letter to which it may be a reply, and these clerks have to enlarge upon it in proper terms and write out the fair copy for signature' (Jordan 1996:66, citing *Fraser's Magazine* 12, 1875:339-40). Salaries started at £20 a year, increasing by

£10 for the next three years; the women also received an allowance of £12 a year in lieu of luncheon (Jordan, *ibid.*). It is no wonder that Courtney had remarked that clerical work for educated women was a ‘soul-destroying avocation’ (see 5.3).

SPEW’s nineteenth-century records are strangely silent on the topic of women working in insurance offices, probably reflecting the national reluctance to allow women into this field as well as the infancy of some of the companies themselves. Even at the turn of the century, one Liverpool insurance company was reported as being ‘a male-dominated business with some men, such as underwriters, being paid high salaries with regular increases to prevent them being poached by rival companies’ (Anderson 1988:4). It is possible that some of the book-keepers trained by SPEW did find their way into insurance offices: but if that were the case, no specific mention is made of the fact in the many lists drawn up by the Secretary detailing the type of work into which its protégées were placed, nor are there references to researches being made into possible openings at such establishments, unlike with many other branches of work.

5.5.4 Law Copying Much clerical work, prior to the gradual mechanization of offices towards the end of the century, involved the hand-copying of documents, and a profession which subsequently employed many women was that of copying legal documents. Law-copying was perceived by the early feminists to be an occupation well suited to the female sex and so, as one of its earliest ventures in 1860, SPEW pioneered the first-ever office in which women could learn the intricacies of such work, and thus earn money. One of the early supporters of the Society, Barbara Bodichon, *‘being especially interested in the Law copying establishment which the Society had done so good a work in launching’* suggested that SPEW would be relieved of the ongoing financial burden of maintaining this office if she herself were to finance the establishment as an independent business.¹⁵⁰ The committee agreed, as a result of which Maria Rye, herself the daughter of a London solicitor, was appointed to take charge with the assistance of an experienced law-stationers’ clerk, at premises rented for her by Bodichon at 12 Portugal Street (*GCM* 3.4.1860).¹⁵¹ This business traded successfully for many years, maintaining close links with the Society, whose Annual Reports indicate that within four years 60 women had been trained, a number of whom subsequently set up their own businesses. However, difficulties were experienced similar to those associated with the ‘closed shop’ of the printing trade, as one magazine reported in 1864, because ‘the [male] law-copyists of London form a sort of close corporation or guild, into which none are admitted without having served a seven years’ apprenticeship’ (*Alexandra Magazine* 1864:305).

The difficulties must have been overcome, as SPEW’s Annual Report for 1865 recorded with satisfaction that in addition to their own success with the law-copying business ‘women are now also employed in three other offices, and their introduction into this business may therefore be considered as established’ (*AR* 1865:3); five years later they were claiming that ‘the number of women who obtain employment as law writers appears to be on the increase’ (*AR* 1870:11). The Portugal Street agency diversified into a range of

other copying services, which were advertised in the Annual Report, and in this way survived until the advent of typewriters and copying machines late in the century made the service redundant.

Maria Rye gradually ceased to play a leading rôle in the business she had set up, as another venture claimed more of her attention: she achieved lasting recognition for her work in founding the Middle-Class Women's Emigration Society, which was initially fully supported by SPEW, operating from the same Portugal Street address as the law-copyers. By 1865 she had relinquished the responsibility for the management of the latter to Jane Lewin, who ran the office until 1874. The management was then taken over by Mrs Sunter, but after a dispute between her and the Society regarding the arrangements for training new applicants, SPEW then ceased all connection with the copying office (*GCM* 28.4.1876; and see Chapter 4, 4.6).

5.5.5 Plan Tracing It could be argued that women working as plan-tracers (nowadays more likely to be referred to as 'tracers' or perhaps 'draughtswomen') are not, strictly speaking, clerical workers. However, a description of this work has been included because not only it is a typical example of the way SPEW sponsored any 'new' occupation for women, but it also illustrates the depth of their loyalty and commitment to a project, once they had taken it on. As plan-tracing is carried out in offices, its operators could therefore be classified as 'white-collar' workers.

SPEW's backing for a plan-tracing office, run by a woman and employing only women, was another of its major successes. Prior to the invention of copying machines, all architectural and engineering drawings had to be copied by hand, a task usually undertaken by the architects or engineers themselves (who of course were male); but it was a lengthy process, taking up valuable off-site time. By the last quarter of the nineteenth century, a few women had become skilled at this work, usually to help out a relative engaged in the activity.

In February 1875 one of SPEW's members, Mrs Hankey, drew to the Committee's attention a young woman of her acquaintance, Miss Crosby, who had been engaged for some time in copying plans at the firm of Messrs Easton & Anderson.¹⁵² Miss Crosby thought that there would be sufficient work to occupy '*many more ladies*' so she sought the Society's help in establishing her own office where work could be procured from other engineers, especially as her employer Mr Easton was encouraging the venture. SPEW agreed that this was indeed an ideal occupation for women, so Gertrude King, the Secretary, was asked to invite Crosby to put her plans before Committee members (*GCM* 26.2.1875), who were impressed with the excellence of specimen tracings which she offered (*AR* 1876). Crosby was able to reassure the Committee that Mr Easton would help the business to become established, by encouraging other engineers to out-source work to her; he would also guarantee '*to take back his present employees*' if the plan failed after a year's trial (*MCM* 12.3.1875). Negotiations with SPEW regarding suitable premises and equipment went ahead, but the start was postponed as there was '*such an unusual depression in the*

engineering profession' that summer. In December 1875, however, Crosby's business was launched from premises in Queen Anne's Gate, rented to her by Mr Easton: he even lent her '*the desks, stools, & now used by the ladies*' (MCM 23.12.1875). Miss Crosby must have enjoyed Christmas that year, as the Society agreed to let her have a loan of £60 for a year's rent, as well as a further £11 for other items, sums which they had raised especially for the purpose of supporting her plan-tracing venture. Three workers were engaged in February 1876, paid at the rate of 6d. or 7d. an hour, with the fee to clients being 10d. an hour (MCM 25.2.1876). By June, she had increased the number of employees to five, with the '*best worker [earning] on average £1 1s 8d per week*' (GCM 7.7.1876).

This business continued to flourish, although from time to time the Society was required to help out with additional expenses such as when Crosby wished to pay '*a gentleman ... to give lessons*' to inexperienced workers in drawing as well as tracing plans (GCM 13.4.1877). By May 1878, however, Crosby was planning her wedding, and therefore handed over the running of the business to an assistant.¹⁵³ '*Miss Long stated that she proposed to conduct the office as it had hitherto been conducted by Miss Crosby and she hoped that the Committee would continue their kind interest in it, and would give it their support*' (MCM 19.5.1878). They did. The Annual Report for that year noted that '*work has now been received from over 90 offices ... and 2,100 tracings have been made*' (AR 1878).

Towards the end of 1879 '*a new process had been introduced for copying plans by means of photography instead of tracing them*' so Miss Long and Mrs Müller (née Crosby) sought further financial backing from SPEW; but the Committee were cautious about the new process and urged them to postpone the change, especially as '*Miss Long's chief protection lay in the fact that every plan must be traced by hand before it could be photographed ... and photographed plans are never as accurate as those traced by hand ... therefore the highest class of work would still be traced*' (MCM 7.12.1879).

It is apparent that SPEW was pioneering this work, as the author of a planned '*carcers guide*' for women, Mercy Grogan, approached the Society in 1880 to ask whether Miss Long would be prepared to teach plan-tracing to '*ladies who did not wish to work in her office when they had learnt*' – information which would then be printed in her book (GCM 16.1.1880).¹⁵⁴ This gives a clear indication that such opportunities had not previously been available. The Committee advised her to agree, and '*to charge a fee of £10 for each such pupil*'. As SPEW obviously wished to retain recognition for the plan-tracing office, Miss Grogan was requested to state in her book that '*all inquiries [should be referred] to the Society's office 22 Berners Street, not to Miss Long*' (GCM 16.1.1880).

The business continued to thrive, and by 1882 was employing twelve women in new premises at Great Queen Street, Westminster. It weathered occasional slumps in trade (1884), and expansion into the use of 'sun-printing' (1889). However, in 1893 SPEW was asked to assist a Miss Turner to start up a separate business two doors away from Long's premises: they refused on the grounds that it would constitute unwelcome competition for Miss Long, and thus found themselves accused of existing 'for the special benefit of certain persons' (Chapter 4, 4.5 refers to this situation).

By 1900, Miss Long was able to send the last loan instalment, and '*thanked the Committee very sincerely for having allowed her the use of the money for so long*' (GCM 12.1.1900). As there are no further mentions in SPEW's Minutes after this date, it can be assumed that the Society ceased to report on the plan-tracing office's progress once their financial stake had been discharged. I have not been able to research the national growth of this type of employment, but from personal knowledge I can report that well beyond the 1950s, Post Office Telephones Planning Departments (still part of the Civil Service at that stage) did employ many hundreds of female engineering plan tracers.

5.5.6 Post Office Clerks Another early outlet for women's clerical aspirations was at the Post Office, 'by far the most important of the government service departments' (Holcombe 1973:164), and again SPEW was quick to capitalise on this new opportunity for women. Census figures record that a few women were employed by the Post Office as early as 1841, although it is likely that these were elderly shopkeepers, carrying out Post Office transactions as a result of the introduction of the penny post in 1840, or were members of the shopkeepers' families. More young women became involved in retail work during the next two decades, some of whom were listed by the Census Enumerator as working for the Post Office (Jordan 1999a:181). The Post Office Savings Bank was established in 1861; and a further move towards clerical, rather than retail, involvement of women occurred after 1870 when the telegraph service was transferred from the railway companies to the Post Office (see 5.5.8). The number of employees at the Post Office 'increased six times over between 1851 and 1891' and the organisation doubled the number of its employees (both sexes) between 1891 and 1914 (Holcombe 1973:164).

By 1873 women had begun to gain firm footholds as Post Office clerks. Some obtained employment as 'returners' and 'counterwomen' in the General Post Office, but recruitment seems to have dropped off by the 1880s. According to a popular publication detailing women's employment opportunities published in 1883, young women could aspire to employment as Second Class clerks at the Post Office Clearing House (Grogan 1883:91). After passing the Civil Service Commissioners' entrance examination, they might be upgraded to First Class, at an annual salary twice that of the Second Class clerks. Only women over 17 and under 20 years of age were eligible to sit these examinations. Such clerks worked much shorter hours than demanded by any of the commercial firms during the nineteenth century - only from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. - so it is no wonder that this was an occupation attracting far more applicants than there were vacancies. The

House of Commons was told that when an advertisement was placed for twelve vacancies as counter-women, more than 1,200 candidates applied: 'the very thoroughfare, as I am informed, in the neighbourhood of the office of the Civil Service Commissioners in Cannon Row having been, for a time, blocked up' (Postmaster-General, 19th Report 1873:15)

Women were successfully employed in the Returned Letter Office of the Post Office in the early 1870s, and the Controller, Mr G R Smith, reported that he had been 'surprised at the excellence and quantity of work done by these young women' during the previous few years (Postmaster-General, 20th Report 1874:16). Nevertheless, the lady superintendent of these women was totally opposed to the idea of *married* women 'exposing' themselves to the public view by working: even worse, if they were to become pregnant. In a memorandum to Mr Smith she indicated that she was opposed to the idea of women continuing at work after marriage, which she saw as 'positively distasteful' to the middle classes. 'The females cannot be so isolated that they will not be seen and recognised, at all events, as they enter and leave the office, by male employees entering and leaving about the same time, and if any become observably *enceinte* they will, I fear, be subjected to rude remarks or behaviour which cannot be for their good' (Zimmeck 1986:162).¹⁵⁵ It would appear that Mr Smith's concern for the women's sensibilities was merely an excuse for a discriminatory practice.

But gaining employment in the Post Office *Savings Bank* presented an even bigger struggle for women. The Savings Bank's Controller, Mr Thomson, was firmly opposed to taking on female workers, and he produced a series of excuses for refusing them. He is recorded as stating in December 1873 that employing females would mean acquiring extra accommodation, which he considered out of the question due to the expense. He also believed that women were 'too slow and over strictly methodical' to cope with accounts work, and therefore did not wish to employ them on the Ledgers, which in any case were likely to prove too heavy for them to handle (see Chapter 4, 4.1, and Chapter 6, 6.3). Internal memoranda detail a long-drawn-out tussle between Mr Thomson and the Secretary to the Post Office, Sir John Tilly, on this issue: the former clearly opposed to having any women in his Department, and the latter just as determined that he should. It took two years of exchanges of memoranda before Mr Thomson admitted defeat, and on 22 July 1874 the Postmaster General sanctioned the employment of female clerks in the Savings Bank 'and their admission by means of limited competition'.¹⁵⁶

As with so many other jobs which women were entering, even by 1910 after women had succeeded in making 'a clean sweep' of all the ledger work at the Post Office Savings Bank, men still viewed women as inferior employees. This attitude was summed up in a marginal note in a letter on the subject, from the Treasury to the Post Office. Mr King, the recipient, noted that 'the women ... gain in quantity, the men in quality' (Zimmeck 1986:160, quoting PRO T1/11464/18470/12). Clerical hierarchies, as Zimmeck has noted, mirrored the class hierarchies of Victorian society: 'As Sir Robert Chalmers, speaking for the

Treasury, the Civil Service, and possibly all employers, noted, “the divisions should be maintained, and promotion from one to the other should be exceptional”.’ (Zimmeck *ibid.*:161, quoting from the Minutes of Evidence to the Royal Commission on the Civil Service 11 April 1912)

It is known that Lord John Manners, Postmaster General from 1874, was sympathetic to the idea of employing women in the Post Office (though initially he supported ‘limited’, not open, competition for their entry). Sir John Tilly’s draft letter to the Treasury in July 1874, endorsed by Lord John Manners, stated that he proposed ‘to place myself in communication with persons who take a prominent part in obtaining employment for educated women and by this means I have little doubt that a sufficiently large number of suitable candidates can be readily collected’ (quoted in Jordan 1999a:183).¹⁵⁷ As Jordan has pointed out this is a clear reference to SPEW, because at this time no other organisation fitted the description (Jordan *ibid.*:228, note 3). Her supposition has been confirmed by the Society’s archives, which were not available to Jordan when she published her book in 1999. The Minutes indicate that it was from this point that SPEW was invited to send its Secretary, Gertrude King, to give evidence to the Civil Service Commission of Inquiry regarding the suitability of the employment of educated women (*MCM* 27.11.1874; see Chapter 4, 4.3). Lord John Manners later became one of SPEW’s Vice-Presidents (*MCM* 5.5.1882).¹⁵⁸

That such advances in women’s position were subject to a certain amount of resistant publicity in the media was demonstrated in an indignant article in a magazine, *Girl’s Own Paper (GOP)*, drawing attention to opinions expressed in a Civil Service journal regarding the employment of women clerks in the Post Office Savings Bank:

To judge by the opinions expressed and the fears which are entertained in some quarters, one might suppose that to be of the gentler sex was a disqualification for all employment requiring an ordinary amount of common sense. ... [the journal stated] ‘The susceptibilities of the male clerks were soothed by official assurances that it was only intended to employ them on mechanical work’ and complains that this understanding was not adhered to, and that important work in this Department has since been entrusted to females. ... (*GOP* Vol.4, No.186, 12.7.1883:663).

As well as detailing the salaries which such clerks could expect to receive, the *GOP* article concluded by noting: ‘We must not omit to mention one important regulation which is not referred to above, viz., that any female clerk who marries is required to resign her appointment’ (*ibid.*).

Another popular destination for women clerks at this stage – a spin-off from Miss King’s appearance before the Royal Commission – was with Messrs Kelly & Co. in Lincoln’s Inn, publishers of the Post Office Directories. These clerks worked longer hours than the women in the Post Office Clearing House¹⁵⁹. but the ‘considerable number’ of female clerks working there, according to an employment guide (Grogan

1883:86), found 'the duties are decidedly easy, and the hours light'. It would seem that once employed by this firm, women seldom left, in spite of a starting wage of only '8s. a week, rising by 2s. a week every year until it reaches a pound'. The guide's author, having thus whetted the appetite of her readers for employment with Mr Kelly, then added: 'but vacancies seldom occur' (Grogan *ibid.*). We may take this to refer to vacancies advertised in the press, since as with so many of the jobs available to women at this time, a 'friendship network' was operating, and the lucky ones invariably secured office work through someone they knew (patronage or nepotism) rather than open competition. Moreover, these jobs would always be routine, low-level positions, with no prospect of promotion other than to the few posts as supervisors of other women.

The struggle for women to be seen as possessing the same intellectual abilities and skills as men was set to continue for many more decades, not least in the Post Office. In a memorandum headed 'Association of Post Office Women Clerks: Memorial for Better Pay and Prospects' Matthew Nathan wrote: 'I suppose that it may fairly be said that women do as well or better than men [on] routine work requiring care and patience but that many of them are less adapted than are the majority of men to work of a complex nature requiring judgment and initiative' (Zimmeck 1986:159, quoting POST 30/2256/E10244/1912). These assumptions, as Zimmeck pointed out, owed more to men's fantasies and self-interest than to any real understanding of women's desires or abilities: but were, nevertheless, 'the foundations on which the occupational structure of clerical work was erected' (*ibid.*).

5.5.7 Shorthand Writing Writing in a form of 'short hand' was used commercially from early in the nineteenth century, although various methods had been in existence in one form or another since about 63 B.C. in Greece. Timothy Bright is credited with originating a more modern system in Britain in 1588 (Frost 1981:2). Many others produced shorthand schemes of their own, but it was not until the middle of the nineteenth century when Isaac Pitman invented his 'New Era' shorthand system (stenography) that it became universally popular (Illustration 5.1). Initially, shorthand was used for recreational purposes, but gradually it was recognised as a reliable means of recording speech verbatim and therefore its commercial uses were grasped. Charles Dickens (1812-1870) was one of the earliest clerks to earn a living from stenography: he was employed by the press to record Parliamentary procedures, and was known to have claimed that he was the fastest shorthand-writer in the country (Cherrington 1982:179).

Whilst working in the lawyer's office during the day, Dickens studied shorthand in the evenings; and how he tamed this 'savage stenographic mystery' is set forth in his own inimitable manner in the pages of 'David Copperfield'. Becoming an expert stenographer, he obtained a post as reporter in the 'gallery' of the House of Commons, first for the *Sun* and afterwards for the *Daily Chronicle*. During this time he wrote those sketches of London Life, afterwards reprinted as 'Sketches by Boz'. (Hudson 1920:206-7)

Isaac Pitman's Shorthand System – The first two plates of Pitman's first stenograph shorthand

Plate 1

Phonographic Sound Hands

Sound	Symbol	Single Consonant Sounds	Notes
b	⌒	b	be, born, by
d	⌒	d	do, done, day
f	⌒	f	for, off, coffee
g	⌒	g	go, good, give
h	⌒	h	hand, here, his
j	⌒	j	join, judge, joy
k	⌒	k	can, king, come
l	⌒	l	all, always, love
m	⌒	m	may, me, my
n	⌒	n	we, know, no
p	⌒	p	up, upon, up
r	⌒	r	we, river, red
s	⌒	s	self, so, see
t	⌒	t	to, out, tea
v	⌒	v	we, with, work
w	⌒	w	yet, you
x	⌒	x	as, is
y	⌒	y	where, which
z	⌒	z	change, shall

Prefixes & Affixes

Double Consonant Sounds

Sound	Symbol	Notes
bb	⌒	brother, bread
dd	⌒	deed, day
ff	⌒	feather, fine
gg	⌒	ghost, good
hh	⌒	hand, here
kk	⌒	king, come
ll	⌒	love, long
mm	⌒	my, me
nn	⌒	no, now
pp	⌒	pen, people
rr	⌒	river, red
ss	⌒	see, so
tt	⌒	tea, to
vv	⌒	with, work
ww	⌒	you, yet
xx	⌒	is, as
yy	⌒	where, which
zz	⌒	shall, change

Drawn by Isaac Pitman, Stenographer.

Plate 2

The Lord's Prayer

Psalm 100

Examples

Rules of Life

Drawn by Isaac Pitman, Stenographer.

Pitman's 'Penny Plate' which offered free postal tuition to anyone who wrote back. It was issued on the first day of the 'penny post', 10 January 1840

Issued & Drawn by Isaac Pitman, Stenographer.

PHONOGRAPHY, OR WRITING BY SOUND, OR STENOGRAPHY, OR SHORT HAND.

THE LORD'S PRAYER

PSALM 100

Examples

Rules of Life

Drawn by Isaac Pitman, Stenographer.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, many male clerks had acquired this skill and were thus able to enhance their usefulness to their employers at a time when the traditional ‘apprentice clerk’ rôle was beginning to change, and it was becoming less certain that such apprentices would rise to managerial positions themselves. During the 1870s, as mentioned above, the clerk’s work had become less skilled, and was a more overcrowded occupation: the old relationship between the clerk and his master was ‘depersonalized and transformed into the modern relationship between capital ... and wage labour’ so that clerks had little hope of rising into the capitalist ranks (Holcombe 1973:149). The General Manager of the Manchester, Sheffield and Lincolnshire Railway, Sir Edward Watkin, reported in 1853 that he required all his apprentice clerks to learn Pitman’s shorthand; and by the last decade of the century there was ‘hardly an office of any standing – no matter what the line of business – which did not employ shorthand-clerks (Holcombe 1973:143).

SPEW was quick to spot the potential of shorthand-writing as a suitable job for a woman and so they arranged to set up a shorthand class for women in 1873. This was immediately successful, and as with so many of the Society’s ventures, the classes continued to operate for very many years. The first teachers to be recruited were, of course, males; but in time the Society also employed women instructresses: usually their own former pupils. Such women gradually engaged in entrepreneurial ventures, establishing similar offices elsewhere in London, and around the country. Many early establishments grew into well-known secretarial training colleges.¹⁶⁰ In 1873 the Secretary reported that the Society had received applications for ‘*women who could act as [shorthand] reporters at public meetings, &c*’; but by 1876 and 1877 the market was apparently flooded and the Annual Reports for those years recorded that women were experiencing difficulties in obtaining regular employment:

1876 ... SHORT-HAND WRITING

Though there is at present great difficulty for obtaining employment for women in short-hand writing, experience proves that it is an art in which they may acquire considerable skill, and which must ultimately secure them employment. Miss Pritchard ... who learnt this art through the help of the Society, and who can report accurately, is very anxious to obtain more employment than she has hitherto had. She will be happy to report at meetings, to take down and write out business letters, to write out short-hand Reports &c. She also gives lessons in short-hand writing. Her writing, both in stenography and in ordinary writing, is clear and legible. (AR 1876:13)

1877 ... SHORT-HAND WRITING

Women still experience much difficulty in obtaining sufficient employment as shorthand writers. Miss Pritchard, 83, Edgware Road, who learnt stenography through the Society still perseveres with it, and obtains all the employment she can. She reports at Meetings, takes down and writes out business letters, writes out shorthand Reports, and gives lessons. She cannot leave home entirely, but she is anxious to get more work, either in short-hand or ordinary writing. (AR 1877:10-11)

Initially, shorthand was transcribed into manuscript, but before the end of the century the advent of the typewriter had enabled stenographers to transcribe it into typescript. By 1879, too, the Minutes of SPEW's Committees were noting that employers of clerks and book-keepers were now *requiring* their recruits to understand shorthand. But the prejudice against women dragged on into the 1880s, as another Minute records:

A large number of circulars to Bankers, Warehousemen, and Merchants have been issued, but only three replies have been received; one deprecating strongly the employment of women as clerks, the second suggesting that a knowledge of shorthand is essential for a clerk. This reply was from a gentleman who for the last six months had employed two women and was thoroughly satisfied with the result. ... (MCM 17.2.1882)

The Society knew when to bow out of the forefront of training, however, as was the case with the book-keeping classes. In 1883 an entry explains their decision to cease to offer shorthand instruction:

Miss Vos who had attended the shorthand class with Mr Fowler and then gained a certificate from Mr Pitman at the Metropolitan School of Stenography in Chancery Lane wants to hold a class for the Society. Resolved that it is unnecessary to establish a new class for the study of short hand, when excellent instruction can be obtained by women at the Metropolitan School. (GCM 12.10.1883)¹⁶¹

That large employer of clerical labour, the Civil Service, was, as previously noted, for some time amongst those more reluctant to take on females; but in due course – over a period of about forty years - women typists, and eventually shorthand-typists, became an established part of the Service. Sir Ian Craig reported that the Inland Revenue had experimented with the employment of women typists in the 1870s, and that ‘the Treasury sought steadily to force girls and women, as typists and shorthand typists, on all departments. They had succeeded with about half by 1911’ (Craig 1955:190). Martindale, whose book was published in 1938, reported that at that date there were 10,000 women on shorthand-typing grades in the Civil Service; but she recalled that ‘as late as 1914’ it was estimated that there were only 600 (Martindale 1938:65). As will be seen from the interviews with women working in the 1930s and ‘40s (Chapter 6), at that time it was still quite common for shorthand-writers to be male.¹⁶²

5.5.8 Telegraphs Alongside the arrival of the typewriter (see 5.5.10), additional developments were taking place during the latter decades of the nineteenth century which impacted on the work ‘suitable for’, and available to, women. The advent of the telegraph in the 1860s, and much later the telephone,

greatly increased the demand for labour, and women were quick to seize opportunities for employment in the new occupations. The invention of these two means of rapid communication 'led to the creation of armies of female office auxiliaries' as Anderson (1988:4) put it. This was not an automatic result of the innovations, though. Women had to fight for footholds, and to overcome the usual resistance to the idea of female labour, which took many decades to dislodge. A typical attitude was recorded by the Controller of the Central Telegraph Office, H C Fischer, years after women had been employed as telegraphists:

The Male Telegraphist has a better power of 'management' and ... his style of manipulation (like male handwriting as compared with that of females) is so much firmer as to be suitable for long distances. and indeed in practice it is found that a Male Signaller secures better results than a female over busy Circuits. This more particularly applies to duplex and quadriplex 'key' circuits, and to busy Wheatstone Circuits (Zimmeck 1986:159, quoting POST 30/364/E171/1880. Memo 10 December 1878).

In the beginning, the telegraph system was operated by various railroad companies, and in 1863 the Superintendent of the London District Telegraph Company, Miss Oppenheim,¹⁶³ submitted a proposal to SPEW's committee for 'the further employment of young women in Telegraphic work' stating that her employers intended to open further Telegraph Stations and would employ young women at Metropolitan Railway stations where separate accommodation could be provided (that is, ensuring that the telegraphists would not be housed in the Booking Offices alongside male clerks). The Committee responded by arranging to call on Mr. Fenton, the manager of the Metropolitan Line. Mr Fenton subsequently agreed that as an experiment he would employ six girls as telegraphists, *'it being unusual to employ women as telegraphists on the railroads. If the experiment proves successful others will be engaged'* but he declined to employ women as ticket clerks (GCM 12.1.1864). The experiment did prove successful, and the number of women employed in such work grew quickly. Two years later, the manager of the British & Irish Magnetic Telegraph Company asked the Society to recommend women residing in the towns of Norwich, Chatham and Newark who would be suitable for employment in that company (GCM 12.2.1866). This was apparently successful, as in 1868 the Secretary reported that she had been in touch with the Superintendent of the female telegraph clerks employed by the Electric and the London District Telegraph Companies,

and had ascertained from them that about 500 women & girls are employed ... that their earnings vary from 7/- to 25/- or 30/- a week. That much anxiety is felt, lest, if the government buy up the telegraphs, some of these should be dismissed. (GCM 30.6.1868)

SPEW's Secretary was authorised to communicate with Mr Scudamore, the chief promoter of the Government scheme of purchasing the telegraphs, and raise their concerns. This approach must have borne

fruit, as once the telegraph system was transferred to the Post Office in 1870 Frank Scudamore indicated that he was sympathetic to the idea of employing women and SPEW, as ever, was quick to encourage some of those on their employment Register to apply. That year's Annual Report noted that 'thirteen young women have entered the government service [as telegraphists] through the agency of the Society' (*AR* 1870:8). Jessie Boucherett wrote that 'by good fortune, or more correctly speaking, by the mercy of Providence, Mr Scudamore, whose official duty it was to regulate the telegraphs, was favorable (sic) to the employment of women. He retained the women clerks whom the company had employed and even added to their number' (Boucherett 1884:94). (Illustration 5.2 shows an 1874 pictorial representation of that office.) An article presenting Frank Scudamore's report to Parliament on the telegraph system, in which he 'commended' the performance of the lady clerks, was printed in *The Times*. It is worth noting, however, that Scudamore's support for women's employment was more pragmatic than altruistic. His report set out his reasons for preferring female to male telegraph operators, which included his belief

[that] women are more patient than men during long confinement to one place, and take more kindly to sedentary employment; that the wages which will draw men from but an inferior class will draw women from a superior class, and hence they will generally write better than the former and spell more correctly; and that they are less disposed than men to combine for the purpose of extorting higher wages. Where the staff is mixed, the female clerks raise the tone of the whole staff. (Scudamore as reported in *The Times* 2.6.1871:4)

It is apparent that Scudamore had a very close eye on the economic advantages of employing women, as he continued:

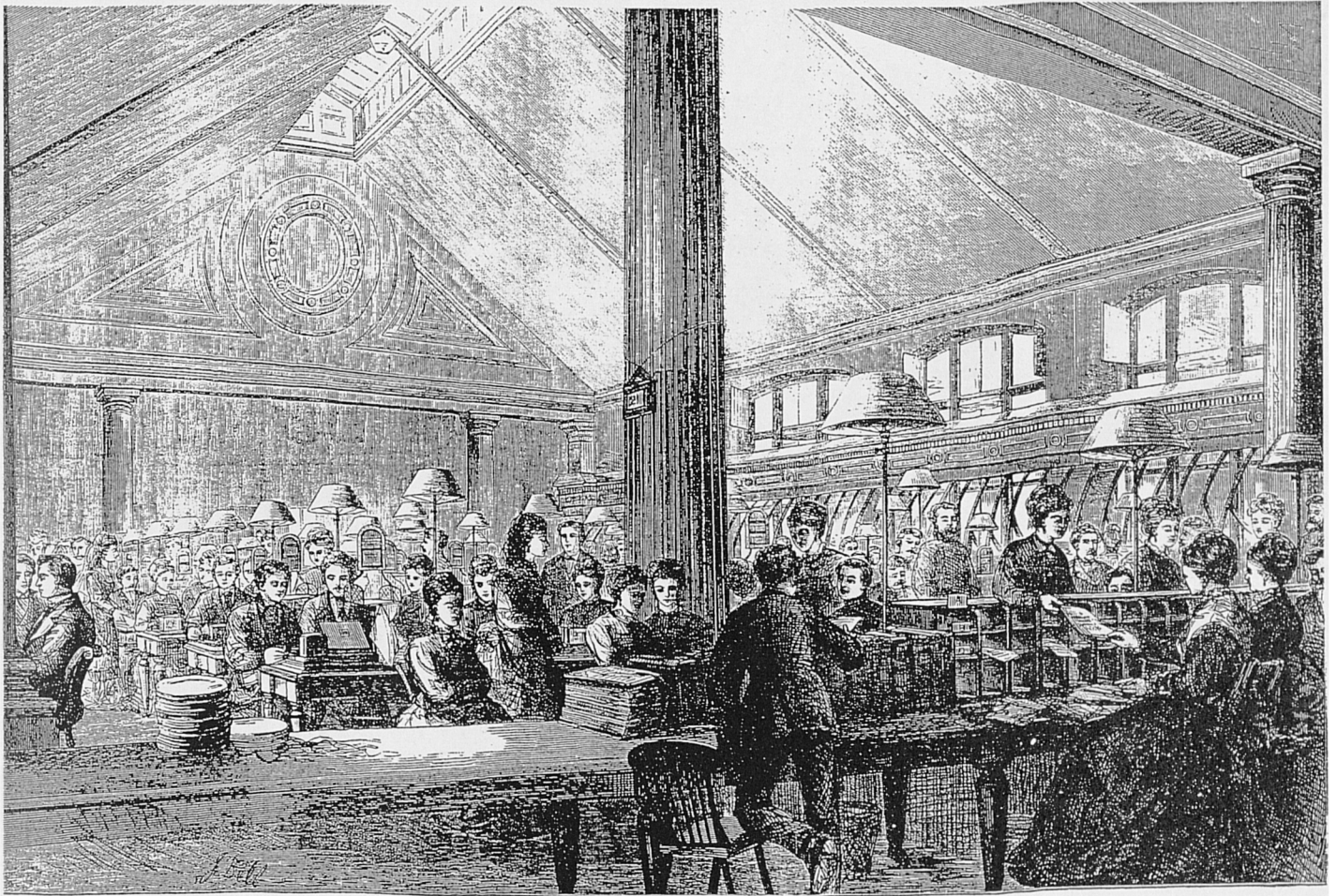
Civil servants expect their remuneration to increase with their years of service, even though from the nature of their employment they can be of no more use or value in the twentieth than in the fifth year of service, but women will retire for the purpose of getting married as soon as they have the chance (*ibid.*)

Whether the figures for wages with the Electric and London District Telegraph Companies, quoted above, were accurate we cannot now determine, but Grogan reported in her 'careers guide' for young women that applicants to the Post Office telegraph service, who had to be between the ages of 14 and 18, would receive a starting wage of 8s. per week, rising to 12s. or 14s., with opportunities to earn up to 17s. for those capable of taking charge of a telegraph instrument (Grogan 1883:88-9). These girls would work an eight-hour day, between the hours of 8 am and 8 pm. The discrepancy between these wages (mentioned in SPEW's Minutes 30.6.1868 and in Grogan's book) would seem to indicate that the girls could aspire to a *lower* ceiling within Government service than with the private concerns in 1868.

In June 1871 the then Postmaster General, the Rt. Hon. William Mounsell, MP wrote to SPEW's Secretary, regretting that he was unable to add any more names to the list of the girls' school of telegraphy '*as it was*

ILLUSTRATION 5.2

The Central Telegraph Office, London, 1874
(*ILN* 12.12.1874:569)



THE CENTRAL TELEGRAPH OFFICE: INSTRUMENT GALLERY.

already so large' (MCM 14.6.1871), but he was apparently well satisfied with the decision to employ women alongside male telegraphists, as his Report to Parliament a year later (in 1872), contained the passage:

From the first day of the transfer [of the telegraphs to the PO] the Department entered on the experiment of employing a mixed staff of male and female officers; and there has been no reason to regret the experiment. On the contrary it has afforded much ground for believing that where large numbers of persons are employed, with full work and fair supervision, the admixture of the sexes involves no risk, but is highly beneficial. It raises the tone of the male staff by confining them during many hours of the day to a decency and demeanour which is not always to be found where men alone are employed. Further, it is a matter of experience that the male clerks are more willing to help the female clerks with their work than to help each other; and that on many occasions pressure of business is met and difficulty overcome through this willingness and cordial co-operation. (Commons Report 1872:12-13 ; and partially quoted in Holcombe 1973:165)

This gradual realisation that women might actually *improve* working conditions in many offices leaves one wondering what kinds of behaviour *male* workers were exhibiting, when employed in single-sex offices (and see EN.141 for Bessie Parkes's comment). Illustration 5.2 depicts men and women working alongside each other in the government's telegraph office.

5.5.9 Telephones The availability of the telephone system after 1879 brought further enhancements to business practices. Initially in the hands of a variety of commercially-owned companies operating under Post Office licences, the latter began the take-over process in 1880, and completed it in 1911 (Holcombe 1973:166). The Post Office's monopoly was established when the High Court decided that a telephone call was a telegram, and awarded it the right to issue licences to any private company wishing to operate exchanges. Losses to the telegraph business occurred from that point on. It was another decade before the Post Office bought up the trunk telephone lines as well as all the municipal installations (except those in Hull and Portsmouth) thereby greatly increasing the demand for operators (Craig 1955:140).

Encouraged by their earlier efforts to enable women to train as telegraphists, SPEW made similar successful approaches to have women accepted as telephonists once the first small telephone exchange was opened by a commercial company in London in 1879. Annual Reports a few years later demonstrated the results of their efforts: 'Between 30 and 40 ladies are at present engaged on telephone work in London. of whom 22 have been introduced by the Society' (AR 1881:12). This work, said the report, 'affords excellent employment for the daughters of professional men who have not had the advantage of a high education, and who are often left without adequate provision'. However, as with so many other 'openings', 'private introduction is necessary for admission to this industry' (AR 1881:11).

Employees were expected to maintain the decorum of their class, even when working long hours at a telephone switchboard. In 1882 SPEW's report informed readers that 'a lady superintends the young women, and does her utmost to ensure their comfort and to maintain a good tone among them. Candidates are admissible through personal introduction only, and it is necessary that they should be under 20 years of age, quiet and modest in their behaviour' (AR 1882:14). This report also drew attention to the suitability of such employment for 'a class of young women much needing help and whom it has been hitherto very difficult to assist – the daughters of professional men, who have received few advantages of education' (*ibid.*:13). That the potential telephonists had to have come from such a class is emphasised by an entry a year later: 'Those whose parents are in trade are not eligible' (AR 1883:11), although an earlier item recognised that they did not need any great educational achievements: 'telephone clerks must be intelligent, accurate and very careful; they must speak with clear articulation, and must see and hear well, but no great amount of education is essential' (AR 1881:11).

Similar requirements were also specified in various employment guides which began to proliferate at this period (see 5.5.5). One such guide, entitled '*How Women May Earn a Living*' refers readers directly to SPEW, where its Secretary, Gertrude King, would be able to provide advice and information. Miss King's assistance with the author's text is recognisable in extracts such as:

The United Telephone Company ... employ about a hundred young ladies, chiefly the daughters of professional men who have received few educational advantages, and no special technical instruction. The requirements being small the salary is in proportion, commencing at 11s. weekly, and rising slowly to 16s. Candidates must be between the ages of 16 and 20. Those whose parents are in trade are not eligible (Grogan 1883:84).

Another 'careers handbook' for young women, written in the 1890s, not only anticipated that the telephone would provide suitable employment, but its author also specifically acknowledged the Secretary of SPEW for much of her information. It is clear from such writers' wish to consult Miss King that the Society was seen as a leading and reliable source of information and, after thirty or forty years' experience, as an authority in the field of women's white-collar employment. The author reflected the Society's foresight about opportunities as telephonists when she wrote:

Women owe much to the invention of the telegraph, for it has been the means of giving employment to thousands; and now comes the telephone to employ many more. As yet it is only in its infancy; but the time is not far distant when it will be worked by the Government, and when that happens the charges will be lowered, and the extension of the business will be enormous, and the staff will be correspondingly increased. This is a fact which should not be lost sight of by girls in search of an occupation (Davidson 1894:29).

Although the majority of the first telephone operators were male, considerable numbers of women were soon able to secure employment with the Post Office, and within a very short time they constituted the great majority of day-time operators. For many more years – until the 1960s - only men were employed on night duty. Usually, however, unlike in the rest of the Civil Service, women telephone and telegraph operators were employed on the same pay grades as their male colleagues (Holcombe 1973:180).

5.5.10 Typewriting: The Ultimate Answer to the Woman Problem?

One of the most remarkable features in the revolution being brought about by the type-writer is that it has done more to solve the women problem than anything else. ... [T]he demand for efficient operators at present exceeds the supply. ... Offices for type-writer copying are now being opened in the leading cities, and they are not only proving to be paying concerns, but they give employment to hundreds of educated ladies of limited means. (Harrison 1888:349).

Chapter 4 drew attention to mid-nineteenth-century preoccupations with ‘the woman problem’. Perhaps, thirty years on, the ‘problem’ was about to be solved. The arrival of the typewriter as an aid to business did not occur in Britain until 1882, and it was only from 1884 that commercially-available machines contained small as well as capital letters, making them much more suitable for business use. In the United States, where typewriters had been in use for a little longer, the earliest operators were male (as had been the case with the use of shorthand along with most other clerical operations) but there was swift recognition that here was a machine which women were particularly adept at mastering and, importantly, which was not already gender-typed in business usage. As its availability - and popularity - in Britain coincided with the period when women were beginning to get a more secure foothold as office workers, the majority of ‘type-writers’ (as the earliest typists were called) were female. This situation was not only linked to employers’ recognition that it cost them less to employ women than men: men ‘lost interest and the job was quickly feminised’ when it became clear that typists were not likely to be promoted (Anderson 1988:14). The link between ‘femininity’ and ‘typing’ was made first in the United States, where Remington sought to improve its sales to the daughters of middle-class businessmen by claiming that ‘no invention has opened for women so broad and easy an avenue to profitable and suitable employment as the “Type-Writer”.’ (Keep 1997:405) Associating these machines with other ‘female’ instruments such as the sewing machine ‘served to domesticate the typewriter’ as it drew the machine into the ‘feminine domain of the family parlor and the sewing room’ (Keep *ibid.*).

An article in the *Girl’s Own Paper (GOP)* in 1888 extolled the superiority of the typewriter over the pen, claiming that ‘type-writing is doing much, and will do more, towards solving the problem of finding suitable employment for ladies, it being an occupation peculiarly fitted for their nimble fingers’ (*GOP* 11.8.1888:745). Such endorsements no doubt inadvertently contributed to the impression that typing was

‘women’s work’ and therefore it would be ‘unmanly’ for the male sex to show an interest in such an activity. The *GOP* article stressed that ‘ladies who have learnt to work it [ie the typewriter] will have no difficulty in finding remunerative employment, especially if, in addition, they can write shorthand’ (*GOP ibid.*). This paper was a penny weekly, started in 1880, aimed at a broader section of readership than other, more middle-class, publications. It seems logical that those from the upper-working class, who by now were receiving a more effective education (even being encouraged to continue voluntarily into ‘secondary’ education after the implementation of the 1870 Education Act), would begin to aspire to the ‘interesting’ working lives depicted in ‘articles about new employment opportunities and about developments in women’s education’ (Gorham 1987:50). Comment on the resultant changes in the social class of office workers is included in Chapter 6.

That women’s ‘nimble fingers’ were ideally suited to the mastery of the typewriter keyboard was a frequent claim by nineteenth-century writers: ‘... their fingers are nimble for the work. ... The fair typist, her fingers dancing quickly over the tiny ivory keys, is to be seen in the merchant’s office, in the editor’s sanctum, in the classic seclusion of the author’s study, and amongst the Blue Books in Government offices’ (*The Young Woman* 1894-1895:230).¹⁶⁴

There were some early misgivings amongst SPEW Committee members about the efficacy of this machine as a long-term replacement for copyists, although these minority views did not prevent the Society advancing loans to applicants to assist with training (see Chapter 4, 4.4). In a rather more surprising lack of foresight, however, one influential Committee member ‘*cautioned the Committee against spending much money on a scheme the success of which she considered doubtful. She herself had tried the typewriter but had found it extremely troublesome to manage and slower than ordinary writing*’ (Lady Goldsmid, *GCM* 25.4.1884)¹⁶⁵ And at a sub-committee meeting, as late as 1890, a young woman was refused a training grant to learn typewriting, as ‘*the profession of typewriter was not sufficiently assured for the Society to advance money for the purpose*’ (*CABMF*, 9.6.1890).

In spite of such doubts, typewriting as a means by which the written word could be more clearly represented was quickly gaining popularity for a wide range of work. One of SPEW’s previously-sponsored typewriting students, who like many others subsequently opened her own ‘Type Writing Office’, confirmed this in a letter to Miss King:

Type-writing seems to be gaining favour not only amongst the professors and tutors at Oxford, but amongst the heads of public and private schools, who find type-written examination papers much cheaper than printing. They have however to be done very carefully, as in most cases no time for proofs is given, which throws a good deal of responsibility on the office. The MSS. sent in from Oxford are, as may

be imagined, generally on classical or literary subjects, and need careful copying, and often recourse is necessary to the University Libraries, if the quotations in different languages, in which these MSS. often abound, are to be given accurately. (*AR* 1889:16)

The importance of typists being well-educated was still being emphasised in a report to SPEW's 1890 annual meeting. Mrs Marshall, who with Ethel Garrett had been operating one of the earliest and very successful training establishments, wrote that 'only ten pupils have been taught at my office since May last, this small number is due to the fact that I will not teach any girls who are not sufficiently well educated to turn out satisfactory copying clerks. Work has steadily increased and is still doing so' (*AR* 1890, quoting letter 14.4.1890 from Marian Marshall to Miss King).

It is likely that the very 'middle-class' Mrs Marshall and Miss Garrett were operating a protectionist policy, having begun to notice that more working-class girls, less 'well educated' than the first 'lady type-writers', were now entering the field having attended typewriting *schools*, rather than acquiring practical experience through training at typewriting *offices* (*AR* 1889). There are many, many treatises in SPEW's Committee Minutes, as well as Annual Reports, emphasising the qualities and accomplishments which were deemed necessary for the shorthand-typist or secretary, few of which would be within the reach of those working-class girls who were products of the Board schools, for example the expectation that applicants would offer facility in French, Spanish or German.

Even as late as 1905, the Pitman's business school prospectus recommended that 'both men and women should have a knowledge of English grammar and composition, arithmetic, shorthand, typewriting, business training and, whenever possible, bookkeeping. "In the case of Ladies, Typewriting is really compulsory, as it is rarely that a Lady's handwriting is considered suitable, without special training, for business purposes".' (Davy 1986:126)

The accomplishments which young office workers were expected to display, and the degree of responsibility vested in them even in low-paid work, bear little relation to those of the average school-leaver of the twenty-first, or even most of the twentieth, centuries. The *GOP* ran an essay competition for 'professional girls' in 1897, in which the girls were to write about their jobs. One young worker detailed her duties in the office of a small pattern-making company, which included writing descriptions of the patterns for publication in five different fashion magazines, as well as translating them into French or German for their overseas customers. She also had to deal with correspondence in those languages as well as English; read and correct magazine proofs; and read French and German papers and translate anything which she considered relevant – all this for £1 a week. She noted that the journey to and from her office took an hour each way (*GOP* 27.2.1897:414-5). Another competition entrant, who had initially trained to be a telegraphist, but who loved her current job at a London sub-post office, was also paid £1 a week, this time for a 12-hour working day, with 15 minutes for each meal, 'but by the kindness of my employer I get

half an hour's rest after dinner, in which time I do all my odd jobs of mending and brushing my clothes. ... At 8 p.m. sharp I close the office and, as I am engaged, ... I spend the rest of my leisure time in making pretty things to adorn what ... will I am sure be, the most wondrously beautiful little home in the whole world' (*GOP ibid.*).

In the Civil Service, the Inland Revenue was the pioneer Government department employing women typists, even though their absorption into the system was very slow. In his history of the Service, Sir John Craig commented that 'the first typist was daringly engaged in 1889¹⁶⁶; a second not till five more years had passed' (Craig 1955:73); yet apparently Craig himself was not convinced of the typewriter's usefulness even by the time he published his book in 1955. He wrote: 'It is doubtful ... whether the output of top copies by a typist, allowing for the labours of controls and checks, exceeds that of the ancient writer by hand; the gain is in the simultaneous production of copies' (*ibid.* 1955:193). Sir John had obviously not met any typists of the calibre of Miss Garrett or Mrs Marshall. The latter stated that '*both she and Miss Joseph* [one of her students] *were often able to write between 80 & 90* [words per minute]' (*MCM* 8.2.1889). And this on the heavy Remington manual typewriters which were in use during those years (see Illustration 5.3).¹⁶⁷

Sir Algernon West (of the Inland Revenue) reported in 1888 that 'the "typewriting women" took the place of "men copyists" and were particularly useful ... for all important letters; for instance "we correspond with the Treasury entirely by the typewriter".' (Martindale 1938:65) This evidence was being given to the Ridley Commission, to whom Sir Algernon further reported that 'though he himself was a very quick but very illegible writer, "these typewriting women can beat me two to one in writing, and that shows the amount of work that we get from them" ... [and] besides being quick the women were accurate and also very intelligent – they could even turn a letter from the third person into the first person. Moreover, "they were cheap and there is no superannuation".' (*Ibid.*) The patronising comment about the typists' ability to write good English implies a complete absence of knowledge on his part about such women's accomplishments or level of education. As Courtney remarked in her autobiography, variously quoted in this study, much of the work required of these Civil Servants was 'soul-destroying' for educated women (Courtney 1926:138).¹⁶⁸

Notwithstanding the ground-breaking success of the women in Sir Algernon's department, however, by 1890 the Foreign Office still had only 'one lady typewriter' although the innovation worked 'extremely well' (Martindale 1938:66). The Treasury, too, apparently took a lot of convincing of the worth of 'lady typewriters', since Martindale reports 'My Lords of the Treasury' as saying as late as 1894 that 'it was not probable that the class of women typists in the service would be very numerous' (*ibid.* 1938:111).¹⁶⁹ Craig offers a slightly different interpretation of the Civil Servants' approach:

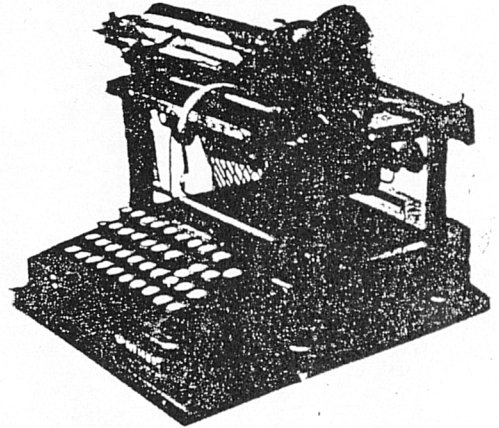
ILLUSTRATION 5.3

Typewriters and Type-Writer 1878 - 1907

a) 1874



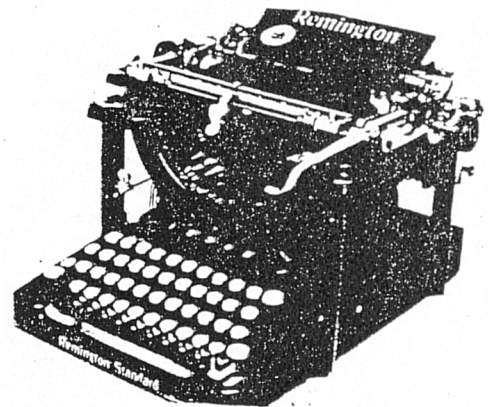
(b) 1878



(c) c.1897



(d) 1907



Another new general class of assistant clerks or abstractors was created by Order in Council in 1898 to save from discharge boy clerks or copyists who could not pass the lower division examination for promotion. Boy clerks, however, were being ousted by machines. After the Inland Revenue tried the experiment of typists in the seventies, the Treasury sought steadily to force girls and women, as typists and shorthand typists, on all departments. They had succeeded with about half by 1911. A mischievous tale attributes to the Sea Lords the refusal of the Admiralty: "My Lords cannot conceal their preference for boys." (Craig 1955:190)

During 1894 a handbook on women's employment contained the passage:

Although the type-writer has in some measure supplanted the pen in many business houses, it has not done so to anything like the extent that it will in the next few years. For one person who uses it now there will soon be half a dozen. For type-writing is neater and more legible than ordinary writing. It occupies less space, so that the eye can at each glance cover far more ground. ... Finally, it can be done at great speed, in some cases a rate of upwards of a hundred words a minute being attained. With these advantages ... its progress will be still more rapid when the inevitable cheapening of price takes place. (Davidson 1894:291)

But there continued to be a gulf between the way women saw typewriting as a means to independence, and their employers' views. Even after the turn of the century, the Inland Revenue's H W Primrose found it expedient to comment in a memorandum to a Treasury colleague: 'After all there is a good deal to be said for not making the employment [of typists] too attractive as a permanent career. We do not want to become dependent, like the USA, on alien immigration for maintenance of our population' - a reference to the fears expressed in some quarters that women might become more interested in a career than in marrying and having children (Zimmeck 1986:162, quoting T1/9988B/14659/03, 1 April 1903).

Typewriters as an aid to business or in personal correspondence were not universally welcomed, though. Queen Victoria was known to dislike the machines, and was said to refuse to read anything in typescript (Frost 1981:9). For some time it was considered disrespectful for a firm to have its letters typed; and well into the twentieth century personal letters were expected to be handwritten. Davies drew attention to the fact that there was resistance to the use of typewriters, on the grounds of etiquette. An example given is this reply by a Texas insurance man to the receipt of an agent's typed note in the early 1880s: 'I do not think it necessary then, nor will it be in the future, to have your letters to me taken to the printers' and set up like a handbill. I will be able to read your writing, and I am deeply chagrined to think you thought such a course necessary' (Davies 1982:37, quoting Bliven 1954).¹⁷⁰

Although many commercial and government organisations were slow to employ female typists in the large numbers which later became standard, typewriting did offer individual women a means by which they

could not only support themselves (just) but also – in the early years at least - build up successful businesses of their own. SPEW was instrumental in facilitating this process. Their archives offer a means of tracing the widening ripples which the Society's first learner-typists set in motion: for example, correspondence from young women who had learnt to type-write through the Society's classes were reporting from Liverpool, Manchester, Oxford and other cities that they had opened their own typewriting offices and were doing very well. Ethel Garrett was one of these (see EN.165). Initially, offices were set up, where work was solicited from surrounding businesses, and a few 'learners' would also be taken on. These girls were at first 'apprenticed', having to pay to be trained; but could receive a proportion of the fees charged to the client:

Miss Garrett ... applied for apprentices to learn typewriting. Miss Garrett has for some months past undertaken to copy legal documents, MSS &c., with the new typing machine. She has more work than she can undertake singlehanded, and a large connection, which would enable her to get a constant supply of work for four or five ladies if she had an office in the city. If she could get the promise of apprentices she would take an office at once. She proposes that candidates shall be articulated to her for 3 years paying a premium of £21 which is the price of the typewriter. She will pay 1d. per folio for all good work done by the apprentice & at the expiration of three years the instrument is to be the property of the apprentice. Miss Garrett is able to earn 30/- a week working steadily for 4 or 5 hours a day & charging 1½d. a folio (GCM 18.1.1884)

The business launched by Miss Garrett continued to flourish for many years (see 5.5.11 regarding the partnership between Garrett and Marshall). There was strong resistance amongst trainers to the idea that typists (and later secretaries) would be equally 'employable' were they to be taught their skills in schools or colleges, dissociated from the 'real' world of business such as was possible in what would nowadays be termed typing bureaux. 'On the job training' continued to be preferred well into the twentieth century – a tradition rooted in the apprenticeship schemes operating in most other skilled trades, as well as against the background of a school system which, in the nineteenth century, recognised little connection between 'education' and 'preparation for work'. It is precisely this prevailing attitude which made Jessie Boucherett's 'commercial school' so innovative. There were indications, however, that girls were beginning to apply to such offices before the end of the nineteenth century (for the payment of a two-guinea fee) simply to be taught, rather than to be employed there: 'During the year, four pupils have gone ... simply to learn type-writing, and one girl has been apprenticed to learn the whole routine of office work, through the direct introduction of the Society' (AR 1889:14). (See 5.5.11)

That typewriting agencies and their 'sister' secretarial schools were proliferating is also well documented through SPEW correspondence files, from the 1890s to the 1930s. In the early days of such training,

aspiring secretarial/shorthand-typing students were expected to offer at least two European languages amongst their entry qualifications, and there was considerable emphasis on the quality of their general education as well as their social skills. As will be seen in the next chapter, this was a situation which changed fundamentally as the twentieth century got under way.

5.5.11 The Growth of Secretarial Training Colleges Learning clerical and secretarial skills through placement in a commercial office rather than in a specialist training school continued to be preferred for the rest of the Victorian era.¹⁷¹ The attitude that each business had its own individual requirements was all-pervasive, and is reflected in SPEW's Minutes. A handbook published and republished during the period indicated that employers jealously guarded their own individuality: 'So different ... are the theories of the schools from the practice of ordinary business – every establishment, too, having peculiarities of its own – that much which he learned in the former will have to be unlearned in the latter' (Lockwood 1989:21, quoting *The Young Clerk's Manual: or Counting House Assistant* (1848); and a later edition *The Clerk's Instructor and Manual* (1862).)

We know that Jessie Boucherett strongly supported the idea of setting up offices where girls could be taught typewriting, as she not only told the Committee that she '*thought that a special effort should be made to start the office under Miss Garrett ... and ... that the Committee should try to raise the sum of £63 for the purchase of three machines*' (GCM 14.3.1884), but she later provided a personal advance when the Garrett-Marshall partnership folded, enabling Mrs Marshall to continue in business (MCM 17.12.1886). (See 4.4)

Of course, by this time SPEW was not the only Society interested in underwriting such ventures. Boucherett had received a letter from Lady Mary Feilding, whose Working Ladies' Guild was planning to establish a similar office with a Miss Thompson, asking whether SPEW would be prepared to share the risk of it. '*They proposed to charge 1½d per 100 words, a price which Miss Boucherett considered too low. She thought that as the Society is in treaty with Miss Garrett and the Guild with Miss Thompson it would not be possible to work together but that we ought to agree as to price*' (GCM 14.3.1884). Boucherett was again demonstrating her grasp of market-place economics during this exchange.

Competition between the burgeoning bureaux became a feature of later years. Mention has already been made of Isaac Pitman's 1930s approach to SPEW (see Chapter 4, 4.5), but other rivalries can be traced through SPEW's Minutes, as well as by piecing together information from additional sources. Mrs Hoster, for instance, was a very competitive businesswoman, on the evidence of correspondence relating to the Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund, and other similar ventures (see Chapter 4, EN.129). The typewriting office she opened in the 1890s expanded into a very prestigious secretarial college, with

premises initially in Telegraph Street. Later (in 1912) she removed the college to Grosvenor Place: a business decision which seems to have been prompted as much by her competitiveness as the need to expand, as these premises were situated next door to another secretarial college, St. James's, whose principal was Mrs Monica Spencer Munt (née Warren, 1879-1932). According to the late Mrs Spencer Munt's niece, who was herself a student at her aunt's college in the 1930s, 'there was certainly great rivalry between the two colleges'.¹⁷² Relationships between St. James's and SPTW by 1938, on the other hand, were cordial enough for the college to offer a scholarship for free secretarial training to one non-university-educated student per year, who would be recommended by the Society (GCIP SPTW Correspondence 4/10). Appendix 27 contains some information regarding 1930s students at St. James's College, indicating the ways in which such establishments 'celebrated' the accomplishments of their students.¹⁷³

Many other similar training colleges began to spring up in the early years of the twentieth century, building on the entrepreneurial activities of women whose earliest shorthand and typewriting training had been made possible by SPEW. The Society's Minutes document how such establishments were disseminated around the country, for example Miss Perkins in Liverpool¹⁷⁴ (*GCM* 26.6.1885 *ff.*); Miss Burnblum in Oxford (*GCM* 8.10.1886 *ff.*); and Miss Reynolds in Manchester (*GCM* 29.11.1889 *ff.*). Mrs Marshall opened a second typewriting office in Trinity Street Cambridge, in 1892 (*GCM* 17.6.1892). Of course, in addition to women who took opportunities to set up in business for themselves, there were many hundreds more who were employed by commercial or other establishments, and who frequently wrote to the Society outlining their successes.

The process by which, over time, office work became almost exclusively low-status 'women's work' with no viable career ladder is summarised in Chapter 6, Table 6.5. This metamorphosis, no doubt, would have disappointed SPEW's founders. The somewhat elevated status of clerical and secretarial work which they had witnessed around the turn of the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries was not to last although its 'respectability' did. For the Victorian office worker, 'the typewriter, the ledger and the shorthand-writer's pad were instruments not of oppression but of liberation' (Zimmeck 1986:165). Davy has pointed out that women's experiences of, and attitudes to work differed according to what part of the twentieth century they worked, and suggests that it is probable that such women 'placed a higher importance on work' in the first twenty years of the century. She added that 'although standards were not eroded in the 1920s and 1930s ... female office workers generally spent less time at work [than their predecessors] and their priorities were more than ever governed by their future domestic role' (Davy 1986:145).

As will be demonstrated in the next chapter, office work settled into a much more mundane, even 'dead-end', career by the time my informants joined the workforce. As demand expanded, technologies advanced, and men were either not available for, or increasingly turned their backs on, many branches of clerical work, there was increasing fragmentation of tasks and recruitment from a broader cross-section of society.

PART THREE

ILLUSTRATION 6.1

The General Office at Huntley and Palmers Biscuit Factory, Reading, c. 1937



CHAPTER SIX

CLERICAL WORK IN THE TWENTIETH CENTURY

'A very suitable job for a young girl' (Mrs GG, b.1921)

'During the inter-war period office work was still "a very good job for a girl".'
(Sanderson 1988:39)

6.1 Introduction

Part Two of this study traced the emergence of the mid-Victorian middle-class feminist campaign to expand women's employment, drawing on the activities of the membership of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. The ways in which SPEW contributed both to the training and establishment of women as clerical workers, and to the range of feminist campaigns which characterised the latter years of the nineteenth century have been set out in Chapters 3, 4 and 5. It was noted, for example, that nineteenth-century feminists were prepared to mount very public challenges to the perception that it was 'unladylike' for middle-class women to accept remuneration for work outside the home, or that there were many types of work which could – and should – only be performed by men. The many high-profile campaigns in which those feminists engaged (in addition to expanding women's employment opportunities), some of which grew out of the traditionally-acceptable philanthropic activities of such women, have also been discussed. Nevertheless, those campaigns presented a dilemma for some of these nineteenth-century middle-class women. There was a need to maintain a respectable public demeanour, but such women's underlying rebelliousness required them to challenge many of the mores, norms and customs of the times. Much conservative press coverage was either critical or disparaging of their activities, though this did simultaneously keep the feminists' concerns in the public eye. As a counter-move the feminists launched their own specialist journals; and they also exploited their social connections with men of power and influence, especially with Members of Parliament.

By contrast, during the twentieth-century the inter-war years saw a backlash against the more militant feminism which had characterised some campaigns (notably for the suffrage) during the early part of that century. There was a shift in the public perception of 'women's place', fuelled by a number of demographic issues. For example, official worries about the falling birth rate at that time contributed to a view that women should concentrate attention on their home-making and child-rearing rôles. The two world wars,

which had temporarily expanded occupational opportunities for some women, were followed by concerted campaigns to convince women that their place was once more in the home. Caine has pointed out that 'more and more historians' have noted that 'the emphasis on femininity, domesticity, and maternity which came with the advent of peace' was a politically-orchestrated rhetoric: the claim was that the imperative of women's 'natural femininity' was necessary 'not only for their own happiness, but also for the well-being of children and society at large' (Caine 1997:225).

In this chapter, the experiences of a small sample of some of those inter-war-years workers are presented. These women grew up in an historical epoch where the prevailing ideology celebrated motherhood, in contrast with similar age-groups sixty or seventy years earlier, when women were well aware that many of them would never marry and might need to be self-supporting. The culture of domesticity of the 1920s and 1930s meant that in magazines there was a proliferation of articles on household management and cookery. There were also many 'beautiful baby' competitions, and an annual Mothers' Day was introduced. The emphasis on the lives of married women, and motherhood, resulted in a view that work was a temporary phase in a young girl's life. Older working women – especially single women – were pitied, accorded a lower status, and even ridiculed (Caine 1997).

My assumption before undertaking the research was that my contributors' stories would indicate that women's 'easier' access to employment would have offered them greater autonomy and independence than had been available to Victorian women. Women would no longer be totally dependent on male relatives or husbands for subsistence; and they would have more control over their own destinies. However, my research findings were somewhat at odds with those initial thoughts. I had expected that there would be a continuum of progress in these respects; but this was not borne out by the evidence from my small sample of informants.

Although many twentieth-century young women were not facing the *same* demographic circumstances, or the social and cultural constraints of a Victorian girl, nevertheless the effects of the Great Depression laid a different kind of financial burden on them: many were required to go out to work in order to contribute to the family income. In their era, too, children would 'do what they were told' (by schoolteachers as well as parents), so that growing up during the inter-war years gave girls little opportunity to pursue personal ambitions if these did not fit into what society expected of them. One informant, for example, would have liked to take an art course (her talent for sculpture was subsequently pursued as a 'leisure' activity) but instead she spent her working life in an office, supporting her family (Miss CC, b.1921). Although my study has not attempted a statistical comparison with the number of Victorian women engaged in artistic or literary employment, SPEW's archives as well as contemporary literature indicate that these were popular and attainable means by which many Victorian women could earn a living.

There were some shades of difference emerging by the twentieth century in terms of the social and educational attributes which clerks were required to exhibit, even though in both eras the skills and competences demanded of potential employees often bore little relation to their actual duties once on the payroll. For example, many Victorian shorthand-typists were expected to demonstrate a knowledge of at least two European languages, as well as establishing their *gentlewomen bona fides* - and some, on the evidence of the young clerk quoted in Chapter 5, 5.5.10, were required to put those abilities to use in their jobs. By the 1930s, whilst such qualifications were no longer demanded for virtually any office work, nevertheless those girls who aspired to clerical employment were expected to have been educated to an appropriate standard, should behave in a 'ladylike' way and to dress appropriately, and would conform to the patriarchal structure of the workplace. Mrs OO's (b.1919) experience of obtaining a post at Huntley and Palmers on the strength of her having studied German, even though her post did not require it, is an example (see section 6.7).

There was also a difference in the ways in which women experienced the physical conditions of the workplace. No longer were women hidden away in sex-segregated offices, sometimes even being required to enter and leave through separate entrances. By the 1930s and '40s it was even commonplace for men and women to be working alongside one another in the same room, even though 'fraternisation' was still discouraged.

The social class composition of the clerical workforce changed slowly, so that by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century there was still a predominantly 'middle-class' orientation. However, there was a gradual shift during this period towards increased recruitment of clerks and typists from working-class backgrounds which would lead to the 'proletarianization' process examined by industrial sociologists such as Crompton *et al.* (see for example Crompton and Jones 1984; Crompton 1993; and Lockwood 1958).

Entrepreneurial opportunities for individual women as had been experienced by a number of SPEW's protégées receded as a result of the twentieth-century proliferation of training establishments as well as the fragmentation of white-collar employment and the resultant 'deskilling' of clerical work (Hakim 1979, 1998; Crompton and Jones 1984). By the time my informants were at work, a clear division had emerged between routine clerking (filing clerk, invoice clerk), shorthand-writing and the emerging professions (accountancy, administration, translating) which had not been apparent during the Victorian era. That some of these categories were loosely class-based might be supposed, since it was likely that aspiring accountants and even private secretaries would have benefited from extended pre-employment education and training - the implication being that they came from families who could afford to send their daughters to colleges or residential 'finishing' schools. Younger girls who went into 'unskilled' office employment straight from school could acquire shorthand-typing qualifications at evening classes, which might lead to promotion; but they would have less opportunity to aspire to the 'top' companies, or 'top' private

secretarial posts, in the period between school-leaving and subsequent marriage. The expansion in demand for the 'school-leaver' office worker thus opened up an alternative and more prestigious choice of employment for the children of working-class families (themselves now better-educated than Victorian girls, as a result of changes to the State educational system) who might otherwise have had to enter domestic service or a factory.

The issue of equal pay for women had gained some momentum by mid-twentieth century, but both eras represented in this study were faced with pay rates which were lower for women than for men, even in comparable jobs. Within SPEW the subject was often raised, without the committee feeling that their protégées were in a position to demand – even expect – the same rates as men; and although the twentieth-century women commented on the inequality they experienced, they seemed to take that for granted. There were also similarities between the eras in the ways in which jobs were obtained, with the emphasis being on personal recommendation rather than open competition through advertised vacancies. The formality of the application, interview and selection process which has become familiar to present generations was much less commonplace in both the nineteenth century and between the two world wars in the twentieth.

There were additional aspects of each era which can be classified as continuities. Similarities included an ideology which established (married) women's – and certainly a *mother's* place – as in the home, with married women being excluded from pensionable appointments and even having to resign a job on marriage. In such a climate, it is not surprising that there were very few opportunities for women in either era to achieve promotion to managerial positions, especially as such promotion might have put them in charge of *male* colleagues. It was unusual for the women in my sample to have a female boss (other than, for example, the supervisor of a typing pool), and the type of work in which the women engaged became even more sex-stereotyped than during the nineteenth century. Until after the Second World War there were few opportunities for women to engage in part-time work – a choice apparently not available to the Victorians – even though advances in office technology contributed to a greatly-increased demand for office workers.

Table 7.1 in the following chapter offers a summary of the most obvious similarities and differences between the two eras (see 7.2 and the sub-sections 7.2.1 and 7.2.2).

The women whose experiences provide evidence for my study were born between 1903 and 1930 (the majority before 1925), and they represent families from different socio-economic circumstances mostly living in the Reading area. However, all have in common that their first – and for the majority their only – experience of the employment market was as white-collar (or 'white-bloused') office workers.¹⁷⁵

As the twentieth century got under way, clerical work found an increasingly firm foothold in the economy. Not only had the demand for business communication expanded, but the supply of a better-prepared labour force was in place. Changes regarding the school-leaving age, alongside improvements in the curriculum, benefited not only the majority of the boys in the population, but more significantly, their sisters. The number of female clerks increased from 2,000 in 1861 to about 18,000 in 1891 and then to over 177,000 by 1911 (Anderson 1976:56). By 1911 women made up about thirty per cent of white-collar workers, a proportion which had grown by a further six per cent in 1931. In 1951 one out of every five working women was employed in an office, and one in every four single working women was a clerk (Lockwood 1958:122). No longer were middle-class girls educated solely for a life of decorative domesticity, or the working classes for domestic service as had been the case for the majority of the women in the previous century. After the Fisher Education Act of 1918 secondary education was compulsory for all up to the age of fourteen (at which it stayed until 1947), even though a culturally-differentiated curriculum was still being experienced by children from different social classes and income groups. This change contributed to the increase of almost two hundred per cent in the number of girls taking up clerical work between 1921 and 1951 (the corresponding increase for men was fourteen per cent). Although clerical work was stigmatized as ‘unmanly’ even before women entered the occupation in such large numbers, ‘the influx of women merely strengthened the popular stereotype of the clerk and further detracted from the prestige of the occupation’ (Lockwood 1958:124).

As noted above, all the women whose early working histories are examined in this study were born well before 1932, a date which can be taken to mark a dividing line, according to Halsey and his associates, between those families whose education was dependent on ascribed social status or family income levels, and those who benefited from the educational effects of legislation (Halsey *et al.* 1980). Those born from 1933 onwards would have been the first-ever British children to experience free – and compulsory – secondary education until at least age fifteen, with the bonus of access to State-funded tertiary and higher education: they were, therefore, no longer dependent solely on the state of their parents’ finances for the chance of an extended education.

Although many of my study’s informants had gained free scholarships to a grammar school, not every family accepted them for their daughters; and even if they did so, few of the girls were enabled to remain at school long enough to achieve Matriculation.¹⁷⁶ As my study found (in common with many definitive sociological surveys), a large number of very able children were thus denied access to an extended education. The economic Depression years of the early 1930s, combined with the after-effects of the First World War (a larger proportion of widows, in addition to many ‘disabled’ men), combined to produce circumstances where many of these women were forced to cut short their education, and become financial contributors to, or even the main breadwinners for, their families. *‘No question of college, as times were hard. Most girls left school at 14. I was the third of five children, and my parents*

thought this a very suitable job for a young girl. I did have a term in the sixth form but my father collapsed and died two days before the first term ended. (Mrs GG b.1921)

By the second decade of the century, the range of clerical work had expanded in all sectors, and women were deemed 'suitable' for employment as clerks, shorthand-typists, typists, telephonists and so on. For the majority of the women in this study, such work provided the *only* desirable alternative to factories, shopwork or domestic service, once it had become clear that they either could not, or would not, go on to qualify for a professional career. As will be illustrated by comments from their case histories, even entry into a clerical career was viewed as 'second-best' by many: an attitude also held by the headmistresses of the grammar schools which some informants attended. However, the path to a job could prove difficult: the girls reached school-leaving age during the Depression years; and even then, some types of office work were considered less acceptable than others. What might be termed 'social snobbery' was a factor commented on by more than one of the informants, who were all well aware that certain household-name companies (local to Reading) were not considered 'appropriate' destinations for many girls:

You either went to a bank, and Miss Prebble [the Headmistress] had to recommend you, or the Civil Service, when the examinations were on, but there were a lot of little local offices that we went to: the dreaded Huntley & Palmers, and the even more dreaded Suttons, and that was it. (Miss QQ, b.1923)

There were lots of things that I think I probably could have done but I hadn't the confidence to go for it and also we were pretty limited: you could either be a teacher, or a nurse, work in an office, or a shop. And those who had no ambition at all worked in Huntley & Palmers packing biscuits. There was very little else. (Mrs NN, b.1920)

As with all prejudices, however, such attitudes did not stand up to actual experience, and some of the interviewees spent many happy and productive years working for such companies. One scholarship girl, who passed her School Certificate in 1938, worked for Huntley and Palmers for 43 years - interrupted only by her war service - '*ending up the office manager much to my surprise*' (Miss TT, b.1921).¹⁷⁷

The post-First World War generation of women who wore the mantle of 'white-bloused worker' which their predecessors had donned found an employment situation which differed in certain respects from that of the Victorian generation. My twentieth-century informants had benefited from a 'better' - certainly broader - education than many Victorian women; and some of them had shown great intellectual promise. Where circumstances allowed, a few achieved impressive school-leaving qualifications (such as Matriculation). Yet, their working lives still reflected the gender divisions, the inequalities of pay and

promotional prospects and the limited career opportunities which had characterised most Victorian middle-class women's working lives.

Within a historical perspective, this chapter attempts to examine the extent to which a succeeding generation of women profited from their predecessors' efforts to open up clerical employment as a route to economic independence and occupational fulfilment. Whether that generation did find such work the pathway to a worthwhile career – or indeed if those women even *aspired* to such a goal – will be examined through reference to the evidence they supplied during interviews or in correspondence.

6.2 Office Life Between the World Wars

The process by which office employment metamorphosed from a fairly high-status, respectable occupation for young men into lower-status mass employment providing a 'suitable' job for a woman took about fifty years. The expansion in demand for office workers did not, on the whole, threaten *men's* livelihoods, since the entire structure of office work – the ways in which the division of labour evolved – was adjusted to give larger numbers of women access to only the routine and subservient functions of typist, clerk, and so on – jobs which men eschewed. There was a fall between 1901 and 1971 in the horizontal segregation of the workforce (that is, there was less separation of women and men into different *types* of work) but vertical segregation - where men dominate the higher grades of the same occupation in which women are employed – increased considerably (Hakim 1998:29, quoting her own publication 1979:27-9).

As outlined in the previous chapter, the advent of the typewriter in the 1880s saw the major turning-point which helped to speed up the process; yet what had at first seemed to be a most welcome opportunity for women soon became another form of career constraint, and typewriters, ledgers and shorthand pads were no longer the instruments of 'liberation' which they had been for Victorian young women. Nevertheless, for the majority of girls born in the reigns of Edward VII or George V a range of clerical work was the only - albeit narrow - escape-route from less socially-desirable, equally-modest, types of employment.¹⁷⁸ For the majority of the women in my study, such work constituted their only paid employment throughout their lives: low-status, intermittently part-time, and without much power or responsibility. For most of them, however, their working lives apparently provided a great deal of satisfaction, as well as much fun. How that satisfaction was derived will be considered in 6.8 below.

Unequal pay was but one of the features of the women's working lives. What seems remarkable, from the standpoint of the twenty-first century, is the sanguine approach the informants appeared to take towards the fact that, as was the case in the nineteenth century, they earned less than their male colleagues for similar work: according to one writer, between fifteen and fifty per cent less (Zimmeck 1986:163).¹⁷⁹ Employers' and government's reasons for the differential were that since men were generally thought to be the

breadwinners, supporting a family on their earnings, women's lower 'single wage' was considered to be appropriate. However, no one appeared to question that many *single men* were still being paid far more than their female colleagues: and it was rare for the single *man* to be supporting his aged or infirm parents – a responsibility invariably taken on by his unmarried sister. Miss CC, for example, had three brothers and an older married sister, but it was she who cared for the family alongside a full-time job.

Interview transcripts offer frequent evidence of the awareness of the informants that they were earning less than men, for equal work – yet they did not express any strong feelings of resentment or rebellion over the fact. *'We didn't always get paid for overtime. You might get 1/6d for an hour, or for the evening. And we got paid less than the men. ... And your brain was just as good as the man next to you, you know. They got more money, and you got less, and you never got superannuated. Which was sad really...'* (Miss CC, b.1921).

It may be that the rather thoughtful phrase ending Miss CC's comment (that it was '*sad really*') indicated that by telling me about her experience she was recognising - perhaps for the first time – that such a state of affairs was particularly disadvantageous to women in general, and to herself as an unmarried woman in particular. She was, after all, totally dependent on her employment and State pensions, yet it would seem that at the time she had probably made the best of a situation over which she had no control.

Miss CC had perhaps more reason than most of all my informants to feel bitter regarding the circumstances which had shaped her early life. In a further indication of her poignant acceptance of her fate, she told me about receiving a leaving present from one employer, after being made redundant: *'I had a nice little gold watch from [the owner of the business]. He said "F., I know you've been here longest but I've got to treat you all the same" so even the girls who'd been there two years, they even had the same as me who'd been there fifteen or sixteen. But never mind'* (Miss CC, b.1921). The last phrase, as with her earlier '*sad really*' comment, reinforced the impression she gave of a woman who had embraced her fate without any bitterness or resentment. She is a very talented sculptress, whose work has been exhibited at a London gallery; yet her family circumstances, and the type of education available to her, meant that there had never been any question of her training for an art career (her father was the village blacksmith). Instead, she spent her entire adult life being the family breadwinner working as an accounts clerk or comptometer machine operator, confining her artistic work to her spare time.

Another spinster, who was a Civil Service clerk all her working life, commented on gender inequalities regarding pension rights:

I was always going to leave and never did! So that was it. I did become established and of course your temporary

service only stood for about half [for pensions]. It didn't count at all before 18 and after 18 it only counted for half. But then of course in the bad old days you got far less than men. And even when they agreed it, it took seven years to get equal pay! (Miss QQ, b.1923)¹⁸⁰

Considering the early struggles which women endured to become accepted into the Civil Service, outlined in earlier chapters, Miss QQ's comment regarding her working life as a career Civil Servant is worth noting. Questioned, she believed that the pre-war status of women in the Service was quite good, although as will be seen from the next extract, her own experience seems to contradict that response:

And you see women were recognised. That was a good thing. Although again it was a bit hard going first of all but eventually you used to have these people on the telephone who would ask for Mr so and so and I'd say no he's not here, can I help you? No, I want to speak to him. And I'd say it's all right, if you tell me, I'll know the case. No, I want the boss. Well I am the boss. You get irritated. Not often, perhaps, but it is irritating. But outside, people didn't recognise it. People I know who did jobs - they didn't have women bosses.' (Miss QQ)

This is a further example, perhaps, that a situation which was tolerated during these women's younger days has only now begun to produce an undercurrent of resentment. These interview extracts also indicate the value to the researcher of revisiting transcripts. During my conversations with the women, I had accepted the tones of voice in which their stories had been related. At the time, they had not *seemed* resentful about the inequalities they had experienced; yet, during my subsequent discussions with my supervisor Professor Fuller, it became apparent that their choice of words could be differently construed, and I am aware that I have missed opportunities to explore those reactions by failing to probe further. Had I pursued the point, underlying dissatisfactions might have been uncovered. Certainly by the middle of the century, many other women had begun to be more aware of such unfairnesses: as Banks has noted, in the United States the rise in the 1950s and '60s of the new feminist movement was attributable to middle-class married women's dissatisfactions with employment discrimination, the lack of promotion prospects and women's failure to achieve equal pay (see Banks 1981:255).

6.3 The Effects of World Wars on Women's Office Lives

The major changes which occurred in the circumstances surrounding women clerical workers during the twentieth century were brought about by external events, not as a result of campaigns for women to be accorded greater responsibility, wider opportunities or increased remuneration. Over and over again, informants remarked that their duties and the degree of responsibility accorded them, as well as their social

opportunities, changed as a direct result of the Second World War, but that things often reverted to their pre-war state after 1945. The First World War had also brought many changes, as had been noted in SPEW's reports: 'The immense demand for men for the defence of their country has thrown open to women many fresh opportunities in secretarial and clerical work' (*AR* 1916:6). This was also the first time that older women had been acceptable in clerical posts. After attending the Society's book-keeping classes, organised by Mrs Hoster, 'fifteen of the employees [taken on by London banks] are aged 36 to 40, and another nine are over 40' (*ibid.*; and see Chapter 4, 4.5; Chapter 5, 5.5.1). Many women had been employed as typists during that war, replacing men who were serving in the armed forces, but not all were forced to relinquish their posts at the end of hostilities, as was the case for one woman employed by the Middlesborough Railway Company. She is reported as stating 'And of course ... as the men came back we were supposed to be redundant, ... to move out when the men came. But the men came back and they saw girls doing their jobs, so they weren't going to do typing, it was a "sissy" job for them ... so of course we kept our jobs' (Davy 1986:130). The same situation occurred within the Civil Service, where female typists and shorthand -typists 'tended to keep their jobs' although temporary clerks were 'disposed of' (Davy *ibid.*).

The First World War also brought about a pragmatic change in ideology: because 'absent' servicemen were no longer the family breadwinners, and women's labour was needed in the munitions factories, women were then deemed physically capable of work which had previously been barred to them. Most women were then required to 'do their duty' once the men returned, by relinquishing 'their' jobs to the demobilised men. Women responded to similar propaganda during the Second World War, even regarding office work. One of this study's informants had worked for a City bank as a shorthand-typist before the 1939-45 war, but her duties changed during the hostilities. She remarked that '*of course after the war when the men came back the women had to leave - unless they had very high jobs. ... I went there as a shorthand-typist, but when the men left you see I took on the ledgers. ... and they were great big books and as they came back they needed their jobs back...*' (Mrs EE, b.1923).

There is an interesting link in her mention of 'big' ledgers with the resistance in 1873 of the Controller of the Savings Bank to the employment of women, the latter's main excuse being that not only were the women too slow and over-methodical to cope with accounts work, but he 'did not wish to employ them on the Ledgers, which in any case were likely to prove too heavy for them to handle' (see Chapter 5, 5.5.6). Mrs EE, incidentally, is a very small, slim woman: neither the weight nor the contents of the ledgers appeared to present her with any difficulties. Questioned further about her work as a ledger clerk, Mrs EE replied that it was not really seen as promotion, '*just grading, that's all. I may have got a slight increase, but not a lot. It was quite a responsibility - it was book-keeping after all.*'

Some of the more formalised conventions of office life were clearly recalled by the interviewees. ‘You were always “Miss ...” before the war’ (Mrs OO, b.1913). ‘Very formal, especially when I first went to London. You were all Mr, and Mrs/Miss so and so – very formal. And it stayed that way for quite a long time – well into the ‘60s’ (Miss QQ, b.1923). Another noticed the differences in a younger generation:

You weren't allowed to express opinions - [you had to be] very proper! Oh, terrible! We were taught at Pitman's ... [always to say] Sir - Yes, sir, No, sir. ... [but] the war changed that - yes, the war definitely changed that. I can remember going with my husband to his company one day and hearing the junior speaking to the managing director and calling him Michael! I was shocked, I really was. (Mrs EE, b.1923)

Not all changes brought about by the war were beneficial to women. Those who were still aged 17 at the start of hostilities were denied the opportunity to sit Civil Service entrance examinations, which were suspended shortly after war broke out. When the Service did resume recruitment, which was made necessary by expansion as a result of the war itself, it was on the basis of temporary, not permanent (ie not pensionable), appointments – a situation which some women, especially those who remained single – would find worked to their further disadvantage. Miss QQ had stayed at her grammar school for an additional year after GSC, until she was old enough to take the Civil Service Clerical Officer entrance examinations.¹⁸¹ When these were cancelled in January 1940 she left school and was forced to take a ‘very boring’ job with the local youth employment bureau. She felt lucky to have been able to join the Service later that year, even as a ‘temp.’ but as mentioned above this period of service did not count towards her eventual pension. Another unwelcome effect of temporary status was noted by Mrs AA, who in spite of having to commute from Reading to Paddington for her war-time work with the Great Western Railway (GWR), did not qualify for free rail travel, unlike permanent (established) staff.

When Sanderson investigated the lives of ten women (all born between 1905 and 1915) who had been Civil Servants, she found that many of her respondents reported having been ‘under pressure, especially from their fathers’ to compete for Civil Service posts. Their reasons were summed up as follows: ‘In those days ... you did what you were told, you really did what father said ... I think that [he wanted for us] ... security as regards a job, he didn't want that we would be in and out of different jobs, he wanted us to have a pension to look forward to’ (Sanderson 1986:149). It seems ironic, therefore, that an incentive which must still have existed for the women in the present study, who were similar in age to Sanderson's sample, should have been denied full access to those very pensions.

Examples which were provided by my informants indicated that certain aspects of the controls on the behaviour of young employees prevalent during the Victorian era were still much in evidence during their own working lives. The exhortations to girls which had been printed in the magazine *The Young Woman* in

the 1890s (quoted above - see 5.2) stressed the need for the clerks to be compliant, not to question anything they were required to carry out, or to answer back – indeed, it seems, they were expected to work in almost total silence.

Things had hardly changed nearly fifty years later, when Mrs GG passed the Civil Service Clerical Assistant examinations in 1937 and went to work for Post Office Telephones. She recalled that it

seemed quite like school. ... there must have been about 18-20 girls in the room. We sat at tables or desks, four in a row ... Behind us sat Clerical Officers and at the back - in charge - the Higher Clerical or possibly Executive Officer. If anyone was needed they just shouted 'Miss Jones!' or whoever. ... We could talk occasionally to our neighbours of either side, but not stop work, and sometimes sang quietly - but we were brought up to be quiet and well behaved. There was no fraternising with the 'other sex' - we just passed them on our way to and from the front door (Mrs GG, b.1921).

Mrs GG also remarked that once the war came, all examinations were stopped, and *'we all received tuition in other sections. ... we had temporary staff who were not examination standard'*. Although the marriage bar was finally dropped in the Civil Service in 1946¹⁸² she recalled that she received her marriage gratuity, or 'dowry' (of about £140), that year and was then required to 'resign', but was kept on as a 'temp.'¹⁸³

Other effects which the war reportedly had on these women's choice of career included the case of one who on leaving school in 1937 began a three-year apprenticeship in beauty culture, *'which I'd always wanted to do'* but who after two years' training had to take an office job when the course was cancelled due to the outbreak of war (beauty therapy not being a reserved occupation). *'I was only in an office because of the war. When I was 16, offices were looked down upon: you didn't go into an office! Oh no!'* (Mrs PP, b.1921) This latter comment referred to the prevailing attitude at her grammar school – a point which is addressed below (see 6.6).

Some women acquired new skills during the Second World War, for example learning to drive was mentioned by one informant. This was a bonus, as it offered her opportunities to take part-time work as a commercial traveller, but that in turn was curtailed when *'they withdrew the petrol concession'* (Mrs UU, b.1919). This woman was one for whom the combined effects of family poverty and a wartime marriage, meant the suppression of all her earlier ambitions. Having to leave her grammar school at the age of 14¼ because her mother was expecting another baby, and without sitting her Matriculation examinations, she had to forego her plans to become a teacher. Obviously a very clever child (she had

originally been given the scholarship papers at the age of nine, which she completed, but '*had to wait until she was ten to have the papers submitted*'), her school also pressed for her to be allowed to sit the Christ's Hospital scholarship papers. This opportunity was refused by her parents. Mrs UU is a classic example of unfulfilled potential: she commented that at the end of her third year at grammar school she '*was the only person who had ever had a complete maths paper right*'. Her job, on leaving school at 14, was in a small office attached to a shop, where the owner taught her double-entry book-keeping to trial balance '*so office work gave me the opportunity to work with figures, maths being my favourite subject*'. But this youngster was required to work very long hours: 9 am to 7 pm four days a week; 9 am to 8 pm on Saturdays, with a half day on Wednesdays – all for six shillings a week. It is sad to note that whereas book-keeping had been the first – and major – means by which the Victorian girl was given an *entrée* to the business world (see earlier chapters), over sixty years later Mrs UU was earning less than her nineteenth-century forebears, for the same skills, and without the social prestige the position had held in that earlier century.¹⁸⁴

6.4 Standards of Behaviour

Twentieth-century cultural and social reproduction, as social scientists have established, was largely transmitted through schooling.¹⁸⁵ In the Victorian schoolroom, the ideologies, values, attitudes and mores which were advocated were an extension of the rigidly-applied conventions as to what constituted femininity, where girls were instructed in 'accomplishments', not knowledge or skills. At that time, as in the first half of the century which followed, girls were inculcated into the belief that their main rôle in life was to fit themselves as 'carers' - wives and mothers.

[G]irls were expected to stay home until they married. Inside her father's house, the girl was exhorted to 'create feelings of great ... love' and 'pay her way by filling in the little spaces in home life as only a dear daughter can, by lifting the weight of care from her mother, and by slipping in a soft word or a smile where it is like oil on the troubled waters of a father's spirit.' ('Between School and Marriage', *Girl's Own Paper* 7 1885-6: 769, quoted in Mitchell 1995:23)

If they also played a rôle in the employment market, the most acceptable situations were those which reflected such female attributes as 'carers': as teachers, nurses, secretaries, and so on. As was illustrated by a typical article in a girls' magazine in the late nineteenth century, a young woman was to 'know how to be *scrupulously courteous* to all with whom she is brought in contact' if she aspired to employment as a clerk, 'always practising the gentle art of good manners, no matter how much tried or irritated. She will dress simply and sensibly ...' [italics as in original] (*The Young Woman* 1892a:262). Dress, as noted also by some of my informants, was almost a uniform.

For the early-twentieth-century young clerk, such considerations continued to be of paramount importance. Manners, speech and dress were aspects of socialisation which adults sought to control. An informant noted that her headmistress was *'very, very strict. We used to wear gloves in those days, and if she saw you or met you in the town without your gloves on, or without your hat, you were in trouble.'* (Mrs JJ, b.1903)¹⁸⁶ Many of the women remarked on the clothes they were expected to wear 'for business': *'I started off with a suit - navy suit and navy shoes and white gloves and so on - not hats so much as during the war they stopped requiring that ... We were always smartly dressed. ... It was taken for granted, because you see this was in 1937 and when you went out to business you dressed smartly. It was automatic.'* (Mrs EE, b.1923) *'There wasn't a dress code as such, but we always wore smart - well, as tidy as you could be. And I was always in trouble with my mother for having new clothes and wearing them to the office ...'* (Mrs OO, b.1913). Mrs GG recalled that in her Civil Service job *'we could dress as we wished'* but then continued: *'Mostly dresses or blouse and skirt and we mostly chose navy, brown, grey or tartan'* (Mrs GG, b.1921), which indicates that there was a recognised 'appropriate' form of clothing.

Another woman recalled an aspect of good manners which concerned the way certain letter-writing conventions were emphasised: *'We mustn't write "I am just writing this to tell you so and so" ...'* (Mrs LL, b.1919).¹⁸⁷ A handbook for aspiring office workers, published in 1964, was exhorting girls applying for jobs to *'make sure your paper and envelope match ... [and] do not write on the back of the sheet of writing paper'* (Leafe 1964:20).

An overriding impression of acquiescence permeates the recounted life experiences of my informants. Even taking into account their ages at the time, they appeared to be inordinately *biddable*. This was something I put to one particular woman, who agreed that this word did indeed describe the kind of girlhood she experienced. *'Well, you were never given any confidence. You knew your place.'* (Mrs NN, b.1920, talking of school). Another (who had attended a different school) commented: *'The emphasis very much was on manners and behaviour, as well as a good education there'* (Miss QQ, b.1923). And a comment summing up many of the women's attitudes was *'You just accepted it. You didn't argue with them [teachers], or your parents, in those days, did you?'* (Mrs BB, b.1923).¹⁸⁸

Obedience, good manners, and 'appearances' were stressed not only within the family, but more overtly in their schools. This was most marked at the grammar and the boarding schools some had attended, but was by no means absent from the Central or Senior school pupils' experiences.

We were taught - now that's where we learned our manners and by golly we were taught them too and I can remember one sister saying to me ... I think I said to her "Can I do so and so, Sister Mary?" and she said "No, A..., but you MAY do it!" and I've never forgotten that. (Mrs EE, b.1923, referring to her convent schooling)

This same respondent was receiving similar messages at home about what constituted 'suitable' work for young ladies. She had wanted to be a newspaper reporter, '*But my father was one of the old school: "You're not going on to a paper! You will go into the bank!" ... But I was told afterwards by a newspaper reporter on the Telegraph it was ... good ... I didn't go [because] the women learned to swear, and they tried to ape the men, and it wasn't ladylike ...*' For Mrs EE and her family, it seems, retaining her 'ladylike' attributes was clearly more important than pursuing a potentially more interesting career.

The major controls were reserved for relationships with the opposite sex, where disapproval of any public fraternisation was carried to extremes. Mrs JJ noted that even being accompanied in the street by her brother was forbidden: '*I very often cycled to school with him. That always caused trouble: you weren't supposed to look at boys! And of course, my brother's friends used to come along, too.*' Other investigators have reported similar attitudes, and the conventions were not confined to any one part of the country.¹⁸⁹ As Summerfield has noted, all 'schoolmistresses shared similar views of what constituted a misdemeanour'. She interviewed women who had been educated at a Lancashire grammar school in the 1920s, who recalled that the school's attempts to segregate girls from boys even extended to public transport:

If we were seen talking to them [boys] we were really in hot water. ... Well of course we used to meet these grammar school boys, you know, and we got to know them, waiting for trams, ... but we had to be very careful we weren't seen, or else we were in hot water. (Summerfield 1987b:165)

The success of the schools' efforts can be ascertained by a further extract from Summerfield's investigations. Asked whether girls from her school had boyfriends, one woman replied 'They were naughty girls if they did'; and another recalled that one of her friends who 'got friendly with a bank clerk' was observed by the headmistress to be 'sitting closely together on a seat [in the park] ... Eventually the girl was expelled!' (Summerfield *ibid.*: 165).

The interviewees reported that as schoolgirls they were subjected to a long list of other forbidden behaviours, and culprits were disciplined or punished. There were strict controls on uniform both outside school and in; girls must not eat in the street if in uniform;¹⁹⁰ silence was enforced in classrooms and out,

and at mealtimes; running was forbidden, and punishable; as was ‘answering back’ to a teacher. Summerfield reported that ‘more surprisingly, girls at both [the Lancashire schools] were told in the 1930s and 1940s not to go into Woolworths’, which was referred to as “a place of temptation”.’ (Summerfield *ibid.*:164) Two hundred miles further south, at the end of the 1940s, my own grammar school headmistress held special assemblies if any of her ‘gels’ had been spotted going into or out of Woolworths’, and the guilty were publicly humiliated by being required to stand up in that assembly if they were the culprits (the whole assembly sat on the floor after the hymn-singing). Behavioural constraints such as these mirror the conventions surrounding the Victorian youngsters: comportment in *public* was strictly controlled.

6.5 Social Differences

Of the twenty-one women in my sample, only four could be classified as coming from a traditionally-working-class home, on the basis of their fathers’ jobs. Three others were from identifiably-middle-class backgrounds: one was the daughter of an officer in the British Army stationed in India, two indicated a ‘professional’ (although unspecified) paternal occupation, and at least one other came from a ‘reduced-circumstances’ middle-class family, whose more affluent relatives provided practical assistance for her totally-disabled father. She said ‘*the grandfathers and the grandmothers, and my uncle, were always very very good to us ... [and] would open accounts in the town and we used to buy in those shops ... and there wasn’t a penny piece from anywhere [else]!*’ (Mrs PP, b.1921). One woman had been adopted by ‘*a mother and her daughter*’; the upbringing of another had been ‘*taken over*’ by her better-off godmother. As has been noted, the very fact that the majority of the sample had to leave school prematurely was due to their parents being unable to afford to keep them in extended education, rather than any lack of ability on the part of the girls. Financially-straitened circumstances at that point in history were the norm for many families affected by the Great Depression: United Kingdom unemployment reached a peak of over twenty-two per cent in 1932. By comparison, it was merely 1.5 per cent in 1950 (Bain, Bacon and Pimlott 1972:119). Some of the girls’ mothers had been widowed at a comparatively young age; others had husbands disabled as a result of experiences during the First World War. One interviewee explained that although her father’s disability had apparently been caused by his service in the Middle East during the First World War, his paralysis did not come on for two years and so he was not awarded an army pension.

One or two girls did want to leave school at the earliest possible opportunity, and actively looked forward to office work: ‘*I didn’t stay on for the exams, ...[although] the headmaster wanted me to. ... I wasn’t interested. I just wanted to go into an office. My father had been in an office ...*’ (Mrs AA, b.1921). School-leaving ages varied amongst the interviewees, from just over 14 to 17 (Table 6.2) although as will be seen from Table 6.1, ten of the twenty-one women in the cohort went on to some form of full-time shorthand-typing or secretarial training straight from school.¹⁹¹

TABLE 6.1
Post-School Skills Training Experienced by the Informants

None	Evening Classes Shorthand and/ or Typing	Short Full-Time Course (six months or less)	Long Full-time Course (up to two years)	Residential Full-time Course (1-2 years)
Miss CC	Mrs BB	Mrs AA	Mrs EE	Mrs DD
Mrs LL	Mrs HH	Mrs GG	Mrs FF	Mrs JJ (at university)
Mrs PP	Mrs NN	Mrs II		
Mrs UU	Mrs OO	Mrs MM		Miss KK
	Mrs RR	Miss QQ (at school)		
	Mrs SS			
	Mrs TT			

In the life experiences recounted by the interviewees, there are indications that social differences were well understood by members of each social stratum, even if conventions were not as rigidly observed, or consequences as overt, as during the Victorian era. The schools, as was mentioned above, promoted 'gentility'; and although some of the pupils expressed an awareness that such an emphasis was not necessarily a reflection of their own home circumstances, nevertheless there were few references to any perceived clashes of culture. Even those who had attended boarding school, or been educated by private tutors, played down any suggestion that social divisions were factors in their lives. However, the boundaries between what was considered 'ladylike behaviour' and 'bad manners' were well understood, as were some of the differences which fathers' occupations, or families' economic situations made to the girls' own experiences.

During two separate interviews, mentions were made of distinctions between fee-paying school 'pupils', and scholarship girls ('students') whose fees were paid by local authorities or charitable trusts. *'It wasn't easy being a scholarship girl in those days. I always remember the gym mistress, Miss Watts. Something was happening - some girl couldn't get something right and I remember her saying "Thank goodness you're a student and not a pupil!" That has stuck in my mind.'* (Mrs LL, b.1919). Mrs LL was the daughter of a railwayman, and had gained a scholarship to a prestigious grammar school where she stayed until she had gained her School Certificate. It is perhaps

significant that over seventy years later, Mrs LL was able to recall so clearly the pervading awareness of social stratification within which she grew up. Another of her anecdotes indicated that those social differences were of considerable importance to her parents' generation:

I made friends with a paid pupil, Mary A. Her father ran the art shop in W. and one day, we moved ... nearer to where Mary lived, and I went to call for her. She wasn't in - and the next day she came back to school and she said; 'Do you know what my mother said about you? Why do you have to play with that common girl?' I might have had a broad Sussex accent then, I don't know. I went home and told my mother and she said 'You take no notice. We know who we are, we know where we're from, and we owe no man anything!' [laughs] And she told me I wasn't to worry. And that has always stuck in my mind, too. (Mrs LL)

In contrast, another woman remarked that her grammar school headmistress had been 'a great leveller. Because when I went there [in 1933] they wore their own clothes but she did away with that the first year that I was there ... so when she'd done away with that - enough of wearing party frocks, everybody wore gymslips. But it was good' (Miss QQ b.1923). This practice removed a very obvious difference between the scholarship and the fee-paying girls.

6.6 Occupational Hierarchies

Once the girls were entering the commercial world, other hierarchies manifested themselves. There were differences in the degree of prestige associated with working in certain types of offices, and this was reflected, to some extent, by the social stratum which a girl occupied. For example, those from broadly working-class backgrounds and for whom any office work signalled upward social mobility, found clerical jobs in very small firms - in offices attached to retail shops, or with one-man businesses such as an insurance agent. Others, generally at the behest of parents, targeted particular organisations as being the only 'suitable' (ie socially acceptable) places in which to embark on their working lives, amongst which were banks, the Civil Service, or large prestigious companies such as Shell Oil - the latter's advantage being that there could be opportunities to work abroad (see Tables 6.3 and Section 6.9, Table 6.4).¹⁹²

Office work - particularly as a shorthand-typist - had long been considered 'suitable employment for ladies' (GOP 11.8.1888:745): but by the 1930s this was not necessarily the view of the girls' teachers, especially if they were attending grammar schools. The view of office work as being a job only for those girls who could not aspire to anything 'better' permeated the recollections of many of the former pupils of such schools, in contrast to its prestigious standing amongst the Victorians. Even amongst establishments offering shorthand-typing training, there were hierarchical conventions regarding the type of organisation to which their students should, or should not, apply for work. This attitude was a direct legacy from the

TABLE 6.2
Informants' Ages on, and Reasons for, Leaving School

Age left	Reason for leaving
14	<i>'My parents parted when I was six ... so I must get a job. Mother had worked in an office as an invoice typist'</i> (Mrs EE, b.1923)
14	<i>'I was a blank sheet, so I went, did as I was told and found I quite liked it'</i> (Mrs FF, b.1930)
14¼	<i>'My parents had to obtain permission from the Education Authority to take me away before the time they had signed for'</i> [because her mother was expecting another baby] (Mrs UU, b.1919)
15	<i>'I left ... to look after my mother, who was ill'</i> (Mrs MM, b.1919)
15½	<i>'Left ... because we were very, very hard up. ... Father always said education was the answer to everything.'</i> (Mrs LL, b.1919)
16	Left after one term in the 6 th form <i>'because my father collapsed and died two days before the first term ended'</i> (Mrs GG, b.1921)
16½	<i>'I left [boarding school] in 1930, because there was a slump - jobs were very difficult to get and I was a bit worried ... about my parents because they weren't very well off'</i> (Mrs OO, b.1913)
17	Able to stay for Matric., even though widowed mother on low income: <i>'We received a grant for my books, then from the second year I acted as Science Monitor and received the princely sum of one guinea per term from the Education Authority for tidying up the lab. in the dinner hour'</i> (Mrs SS, b.1924)

early clerical workers' experiences, since as was illustrated in previous chapters, the most sought-after nineteenth-century establishments such as the Civil Service, or city banks would only consider employing those young women as clerks or typists who possessed 'gentlewoman' *bona fides*.

Proprietors of private 'secretarial' training institutes apparently also held strong views about the employment destinations befitting their leavers. One interviewee commented that *'Miss East [the proprietor] was dead against any of us going to Huntley & Palmers'* and when asked whether she knew anyone who *had* taken a job there, replied *'No, no, I didn't! Certainly not from Taylor and East, anyway! Well, nobody else!'* (Mrs AA, b.1921). Pressed for a reason, Mrs AA thought it might have been because that company had a reputation for time-and-motion study methods: *'and they put something on the typewriter that monitored how many taps you did...'*¹⁹³ However, Mrs AA's tone of voice indicated that she took some vicarious pride in having been trained at a place

which held such 'standards' in high regard – perhaps another aspect of attitudes towards different social groups.

TABLE 6.3

Informants' First Jobs

Name	Brief details of first job(s) after leaving school or completing training course	Length of stay
Mrs AA	Shorthand-typist, British General Insurance Company, Reading	5 yrs
Mrs BB	Typist at Pearl Assurance Company, London; then Air Ministry during 2 nd WW	1 + 4 yrs
Miss CC	Accounts clerk, Huntley & Palmers, Reading; later, comptometer operator there	4 yrs
Mrs DD	Secretary, Aviation Department, Shell Petroleum, London	7 yrs
Mrs EE	Shorthand-typist, North of Scotland Bank, London	1 yr
Mrs FF	Junior shorthand-typist to an Accountant, Thirsk	2 yrs
Mrs GG	Clerical assistant, Civil Service (Post Office Telephones, Reading)	10 yrs
Mrs HH	Cost clerk, Berlei Company, Slough	1 yr
Mrs II	Shorthand-typist, motor company, Reading	18 mths
Mrs JJ	Secretary to Editor of local weekly paper, Reading	8 yrs
Miss KK	Secretary to Principal of residential college, then temp. jobs (health problems)	6 mths
Mrs LL	Clerk in wholesale grocer's office, Worthing	2 yrs
Mrs MM	Shorthand-typist at Milk Marketing Board, Reading	2 yrs
Mrs NN	Shorthand-typist to agent for National Deposit Friendly Society, Reading	3 ys
Mrs OO	Shorthand-typist, Huntley and Palmers, Reading	10 yrs
Mrs PP	GWR Clerk (after apprenticeship for beauty culture cancelled because of war)	24 yrs*
Miss QQ	Clerical Officer, Civil Service, Reading, then London	40 yrs
Mrs RR	Salesgirl initially; then typist with GWR Reading and Paddington	4 yrs
Mrs SS	Secretary to Manager, Westminster Bank, Reading. Served in ATS for 2 years	14 yrs
Miss TT	Wages clerk/typist, Huntley and Palmers, Reading. Served in ATS for 4 years	43 yrs
Mrs UU	Book-keeping clerk, retail shop, Reading	9 yrs

*This woman married her boss at age 43, then ceased working

The attitude of grammar school headmistresses probably says more about perceptions of their schools' main purpose, however, than reflecting any prejudice against clerical workers *per se*. Girls' grammar schools were modelled on the long tradition of those for boys, when pupils were groomed for an extended – largely classical – education as gentlemen, far removed from the world of trade and commerce (inherited wealth and independent incomes characterised 'gentlemen'). Any curricular subject which had a link with 'preparation for work' was eschewed, well into the second half of the twentieth century. Bearing in mind that children who accepted (or purchased, prior to the implementation of the Butler Education Act of 1944) places at such schools were expected to remain for at least one year – preferably more – beyond the statutory leaving-age of 14, and that their parents even had to sign an agreement that the child would stay at school until after Matriculation, it is not surprising that headteachers were less interested in what became of their 'early leavers' than those who would go into the sixth forms.¹⁹⁴ At this time, too, careers advice, let alone careers education, was virtually unknown. The few examples where girls' grammar schools offered sixth formers the opportunity to study vocational subjects such as shorthand or typewriting, illustrate the

low status of these subjects: *'We had typewriters in the lower sixth which we could use'* (Mrs GG, b.1921). But such activities were often relegated to the 'attic' or the cellars (quite literally):

If you weren't going to go on to do Highers, you had free periods. We were really a very polyglot collection and - it was down the back stairs, near the kitchen - nobody came to see us. We played around on the typewriters ... my typing was useless. ... And if you wanted to do that, you probably left early and went to somewhere where they learnt (sic) shorthand and typing, and had to pay. (Miss QQ, b.1923)

Asked what they recalled of advice from school regarding their choice of work, the women painted a consistent picture:

'When I was 16, offices were looked down upon: you didn't go into an office! Oh no!' (Mrs PP, b.1921)

'The school was not very helpful at that time ... the only people they really paid any attention to were the people who were taking their final exams ... and if you weren't in for Matric, ... then they weren't very helpful' (Mrs HH, b.1928)

'The school's expectations were that all girls would either go to university, or into a bank' (Mrs SS, b.1924).

'The school was very pushy, and they were trying to make a schoolteacher of me, but I didn't want to be a teacher ...' (Mrs JJ, b.1903).

'Only the rich went to university, the others got a job' (Miss TT, b.1921).

'I don't think we were offered the chance to go on with the academic work' (Mrs LL, b.1919) [this woman did Matriculate]

'One of my teachers suggested I should teach - I just laughed' (Mrs NN, b.1920).

'Our headmistress at the time had a rather narrow view of what girls were expected to do. Teach, yes, nurse, yes, but going into the commercial world, even the Civil Service, wasn't really approved of. But going into the commercial world, as I did, wasn't done! ... I ought really to have stayed another year - I was intended - I was intended to teach languages according to my headmistress' (Mrs OO, b.1913).

The 'rank-order' snobbery associated with offices in general was associated with the type of business in which different organisations were engaged. When Mrs AA told her insurance company employer that she

had secured another post, and would be leaving, she reported him as saying '*Who, where?*' in a sneery voice. *When I said that it was the GWR, he said 'The RAILWAY??' - he was very disapproving*'. Her explanation to me regarding his reaction was that '*in those days, if you got into insurance or banking, or the legal profession, well, you were in a jolly good job*' (Mrs AA, b.1921). The 'jolly good job' reputation was not, however, linked to the level of pay, which was sometimes less than in other types of business; it was the *status* associated with the organisation which was important. Grammar school heads appeared to rank banks and the Civil Service above any type of commercial business; and offices associated with *factories* such as Huntley and Palmers, Simmonds Brewery or Sutton's Seeds (all important employers in Reading at that time) were at the bottom of the pecking order. One interviewee said that she had applied for a job with an insurance company, thinking that it would be 'better' than staying in the offices of the biscuit factory:

I got very unsettled at one point - everybody was leaving to do other jobs. The thing to do was to go to an insurance office ... so I went for an interview, after office hours you must understand, and I was surprised that they weren't going to pay me as much as I was being paid at H & P. And they didn't seem to know anything about things like calculating machines ... I said that I used a Burroughs (or was it a Monroe?) calculator - and they said what's that? (laughs). So my opinion of insurance companies went down! (Mrs OO, b.1913).

The differences between girls who had merely acquired some shorthand-typing skills, and those who set out to be trained for secretarial careers were also well understood by interviewees, with some women commenting in disparaging terms about office workers who dared to label themselves 'secretaries' when they were merely 'shorthand-typists'. Mrs EE (b.1923) compared her full-time course at Pitman's College with '*today's young girls, who do a three months' course and come out as secretaries! Now what could you learn in that time? I mean it took a year just to go through the shorthand theory in my day.*' Miss KK and Mrs DD also stressed the extensive nature of the curriculum at their residential secretarial college, where they were expected to write shorthand (up to speeds of 130 words a minute) in French as well as English and where 'Journalism' could be taken as an optional extra.¹⁹⁵ Their qualifications also included competency in book-keeping. The 'traditional' nature of the curricula at such establishments may be traced to SPEW's legacy, since the owner/principal of the prestigious college attended by Miss KK and Mrs DD, Miss Kerr Sanders, had herself been trained by the Mrs Hoster whose rôle in SPEW's affairs has already been mentioned (AR 1920). Hoster was also 'proud to report' that it was another of her pupils whose ability to speak and report in the German language resulted in her being 'the only expert ready and able to attend the handing over of the Peace Terms and to take down the German speeches' at the end of the First World War (GCIP SPTW 4/1Report 1920:6).

This attitude regarding the educational accomplishments of secretaries had been very prevalent during the latter part of the Victorian era. Much was made of the accomplishments and standards of those who had followed a full preparatory course, compared with the larger numbers of inadequately-prepared young women who began to flood the employment market once demand expanded in the latter years of the period under review here. Initially, it has been noted above, 'on-the-job' training was considered preferable; but full-time secretarial courses became popular after the turn of the century. The Annual Reports of SPEW, as well as some of their Minutes, frequently offered homilies about the standards expected. The following extract from one such Report illustrates the familiar tone:

The employment of women as secretaries, clerks, and book-keepers has increased enormously during the last ten or fifteen years; nevertheless the number of those seeking clerical work far exceeds the demand for them. Some girls seem to think that the only qualification needed for secretarial work is a knowledge of shorthand and typing, regardless of spelling, composition and punctuation. An efficient secretary, whether private or commercial, ought to have received a liberal education, so that she may be able to write her own language correctly, be familiar with historical names and allusions, and also with scientific terms. In addition to these qualifications she must have acquired skill in shorthand and typing, preferably in a good office, where she has had the opportunity of seeing work of various kinds, and of acquiring business habits. She ought also to be able to correspond in one or two foreign languages. The mere shorthand clerk whose general education has lasted only till she was 14 or 15 years of age, and who has learnt shorthand and typing at a school, is a drug in the market, and frequently finds it almost impossible to get an engagement. Still, if a really efficient secretary is wanted, at a good salary, it is often difficult to find a woman qualified to fill the post. The Committee, therefore, endeavour to help well-educated women only, to get the necessary technical training. During the past year loans have been granted to three young women who are training for secretarial work. (*AR 1906:13-14*)

Even in 1920 further admonishments were being offered by Mrs Hoster, whose experience spanned five decades at the time of her death in 1939. In her address to SPEW members at an annual meeting regarding the 'need of thorough training for Secretarial work' she warned:

but unfortunately there are so many who have to earn as quickly as possible and it is due to this that there are so many who are inefficiently trained. They think they are going to pick up things. We always tell them they cannot. Training alone can make them efficient. ... And I do think that everyone who has undertaken the training of these girls knows how much they have to be taught. I have a great many University girls, and they especially seem to think that looking at a machine will teach them how to type ... (*GCIP SPTW 4/1 Report 1920*).

The many women interviewed for this study, who had left school at 14 or 15, and had 'learnt shorthand and typing at a school' would therefore epitomise the reasons for the deterioration in the status of such employees which SPEW's members so regretted. But the expansion in demand for these skills, as well as the gradual stratification of female clerical work meant that there would be more openings for a lower-level worker than for the over-qualified secretary.¹⁹⁶ Courtney wrote in 1926, rather caustically, that the women clerks who were drafted to serve on a committee she was to head, 'were admirable examples of the principle that "the Government does not pay for brains".' (Courtney 1926:264) She also noted that 'the demand for lower-grade clerical work [rose] to such a point that even the unskilled clerical amateur could command a living wage ... by the second year of the war women of all ages and every degree of incompetence had been swallowed up in the enormous staffs tumbling over each other up and down Whitehall' (Courtney *ibid.*: 266-7).

It would be unfair to categorise the women in my sample as 'unskilled amateurs'. Many of them had capabilities far in excess of their qualifications; opportunities for more demanding work simply were not available. Crompton and Jones have drawn attention to the state of affairs which was becoming apparent in the first quarter of the twentieth century: not only were many branches of office work rapidly becoming 'deskilled', but the evidence from their research indicated that it was women who were worse off as a result. They reported that their material provided concrete evidence of the way in which women had been segregated into the lowest-grades of office work (Crompton and Jones 1984).¹⁹⁷ They further posited that 'in the particular case of clerical work ... the relatively homogeneous process [of deskilling] ... has been overlaid by a gender-based allocative process which has concentrated women in particular types (and lower levels) of clerical employment' (Crompton and Jones 1984:133).

As subsequent history has shown, even very accomplished young women would come up against the deskilling barriers to advancement which became a feature of secretarial and other clerical work during the twentieth century. Similar findings to those of Hakim (Hakim 1979; 1998) were reported by Crompton and Jones. Outlining the shift from a situation where different types of work had once been allocated to men and to women (ie horizontal segregation as epitomised in the Victorian era) to a more vertical segregation, these authors found that women's opportunities as clerical workers demonstrated 'restricted mobility, and limited promotional ladders ... [S]ecretarial work effectively constitutes a female "ghetto" within which rewards are limited, as are promotion opportunities' (Crompton and Jones *ibid.*:139). Women had less 'human capital' with which to negotiate, since they frequently interrupted their working lives for example to raise a family, and were unlikely to add to their formal qualifications.¹⁹⁸

The women I interviewed did not appear to have viewed their jobs in promotional terms, although they did express interest in the level of wages which they received. They spoke more of the intrinsic satisfactions of their work rather than where those jobs might lead them: many had in fact carried out tasks which were

relatively skilled and demanding, which they felt added to the intrinsic satisfactions they derived (see 6.8). Some women (eg Miss KK and Mrs OO) contributed anecdotes regarding incidents where they realised certain of their abilities exceeded those of a boss, and they then derived satisfaction from his *recognition* of their skills, findings which paralleled those of Crompton and Jones (*ibid.*1984:163). Marriage, on the other hand, was seen as their 'next' and almost inevitable career.¹⁹⁹ And at school, 'careers advice' was completely unknown: '*There wasn't anything like that. They were there to teach you, teach you at school, that that was it. Chop!*' (Miss QQ b.1923). This last word was accompanied by an illustrative movement of her hand: in other words, the separation of school and work was complete.

It was only later (in some cases, *many* years later) that a few of my informants looked back and realised that they had not capitalised on their own intellectual abilities, perhaps not recognising them at the time. Families' financial need for the girls' earnings has already been mentioned, but it is apparent that for many children, lack of awareness of their own capabilities led to a lack of real ambition. One interviewee said that she had left school before speech day, as the family were very hard up, but later she '*got all the papers from school, where it says [about] the speech day and the qualifications, and beside my name is M which means I passed Matriculation ... but I don't think we were offered the chance to go on with the academic work*' (Mrs LL, b.1919). It seems to have been a feature of the experiences of her generation that children from families such as hers were not encouraged by their schools to fulfil, even recognise, their own potential.

The reasons why the female age-group investigated here manifest different work orientations from men's must include the impact of their primary socialisation, where many sociologists report women as thinking of marriage as their 'real' career and therefore any job between school and marriage was viewed as 'filling in time'.²⁰⁰ The family's need for their wages was seen in similar 'temporary' terms as presumably a married daughter meant one mouth less to feed. In addition 'women's work' was seen as *different* from men's, just as women's responsibilities within the family differed from those of brothers and husbands (see Young and Willmott 1957 and Willmott and Young 1960); and women still do experience more domestic responsibilities than men, such as the care of young or elderly dependants, a duty which was even more necessary prior to the provisions of the Welfare State in 1948. Finally, the very nature of the 'women's jobs' available to them meant that they were likely to experience less intrinsic job satisfaction, or even extrinsic in the form of high wages. In the years under review here, the majority of girls left school without the qualifications which would have enabled them to enter 'the highly paid, highly organised skilled manual trades which are entered mainly via apprenticeships [and] openings ... are either into respectable "white blouse" work ... or into semi-skilled and unskilled work...' (Delamont 1980:87).²⁰¹ Brown suggests that 'the rewards for them are not such as to increase their involvement in the world of work at the expense of their "central life interests" in the home and family' (Brown 1976:33).

As much of the clerical work done by women by the twentieth century did not require the exercise of a great deal of intellectual effort, there were perhaps fewer incentives to view work as a 'career' or even to remain in a post. The majority of jobs examined by Crompton and Jones for their 1980s study were advertised as requiring 'at least O level standard' whereas in reality, 'many jobs at all levels ... [in the three organisations studied] were successfully carried out by people with no or only minimal qualifications' (Crompton and Jones 1984:75). This is a feature noted by some of my informants, for example Mrs PP, who said that the war made this more obvious: '*Not even an interview. "Start Monday", as of course we were needed to fill service men's places. In fact you could say in desperation they'd take anyone!*' (Mrs PP, b.1921). Courtney, quoted above, had also made the point that the government didn't pay for brains at this time (Courtney 1926:264).

6.7 Getting the Job

Prior to the war, however, as was the experience of women in Victorian times (*cf.* Chapter 5) getting a job in the 1920s and 1930s was often a case of 'who you know', rather than open competition - even for some 1940s Civil Service posts. Many of the women reported that their first jobs were the result of either a family contact, or a fortuitous meeting, and only rarely did the girls make formal applications in response to advertisements for vacancies. Sometimes, as noted above, the girls were upset at having to leave school, so perhaps did not feel wholehearted interest in seeking a job. One woman reported sadly that she did not take her leave of her headmistress: '*I didn't go and say goodbye to her, as I was too upset at leaving*' (Mrs UU, b.1919). This child was leaving a prestigious grammar school after only three years there, even though her parents had been '*proud and pleased*' when she passed the scholarship, and in spite of her considerable ability with mathematics. She left because during those three years a sibling had been born and her mother was then expecting yet another baby. Mrs UU had wanted to be a teacher; instead, she started work in the offices of a Reading shoe shop at age fourteen, where she was '*taught double-entry book-keeping to trial balance*' but was also expected to work in the shop during busy periods. She must have demonstrated her competence to her employers, as her written evidence states that she became '*an experienced shoe fitter and also learnt orthopaedics and practipedics*'²⁰² (Mrs UU, b.1919). She remained with this firm for nine years, leaving only when expecting her own first child.

Parents played an important part both in the type of work which the girls took, and the organisations which they joined. Mrs EE and her sister were taken on by Scottish banks in London, because '*my father was a Scot so both Sheila and I got into Scottish banks*' (Mrs EE, b.1923. Her sister's hope of being a hairdresser had been vetoed by their father). Sometimes, a parent accompanied a daughter to an interview: one mother was present during the first two interviews which her daughter attended. During the first one her mother was horrified to learn that the job involved office work from Monday to Friday but on Saturday

she would have to go in and clean the offices. Her mother told the interviewer ‘to “*Just - stop - right - there!*” She hadn’t “*paid for my daughter’s education to come and be a servant. I wanted her to be educated for a good job and I don’t consider office work and scrubbing floors are compatible! So no thank you*” and I was bundled out’ (Mrs FF b.1930). The practice of parents’ accompanying daughters may well have remained common well after her era, since a handbook for aspiring office juniors published in the 1960s warned girls that it was ‘not advisable to take a parent with you for an interview. The employer wants to hear what you have to say and ... when a mother is present ... the poor daughter is unable to get a word in at all’ (Leafe 1964:21).

Those who took active steps to find work were more likely to have chosen a particular company or organisation, to which they then wrote requesting an interview, than to have responded to advertisements for vacancies. One informant wanted to use her ability with foreign languages, so

I wrote a letter to Huntley and Palmers explaining that I would be leaving school at the end of the summer term, and would they put my name down for the foreign department. ... I’d only been home on holiday about a fortnight and I was very disgusted because they offered me a job to start on 1st September ... but it wasn’t in the foreign department ... well, in any case jobs were very hard to get then, so if you were offered one then the thing to do was to take it... (Mrs OO, b.1913).

This woman had obtained the job, one suspects, because her ability to speak foreign languages marked her out as a school-leaver of above-average ability.²⁰³ That the company had no need for her to *use* those languages in their employ is apparent from the type of work she was given. This case is typical of the experience of many intellectually-able girls drifting into office work before the 1960s, and which led many to seek a more challenging career in later life, where they might ‘use their brains’ to better effect.²⁰⁴

My survey of advertisements in Reading’s local newspapers for this period indicated that most vacancies related to openings for domestic staff: the minority requiring clerks or shorthand-typists were usually with insurance companies. The ‘Situations Wanted’ columns included pleas from males, as well as females, for office work: ‘Ex-Sergeant, Royal Berkshire Regiment, seeks situation as Copying Clerk or any position of trust, part or whole time’; a ‘well-educated youth of 17, good writer’ was also seeking clerical work; and another ‘young man ... knowledge of clerical work ...’ was looking for a ‘situation’ (Advertisements, *Reading Standard*, 11 July 1925). Requests from women included ‘Lady with Commerce Certificate, University College, Reading, seeks Situation as Secretary. Excellent references’; and ‘Secretarial work in office ... wanted by educated woman; shorthand, type writing, office routine, filing, indexing, compiling. Willing take quite moderate salary’ (Advertisements, *Reading Standard*, 18 July 1925). The contrast

between the accomplishments of the respective sexes is quite noticeable, as is the latter advertiser's intention of drawing attention to the economic advantage associated with employing a woman.

The oldest respondent amongst the interviewees, who was the only one to have continued into higher education straight from school, drew attention to the difficulty of obtaining employment in the mid-1920s: *'Of course when I came out there were no jobs to get. And I didn't want to go away from home. I got a job in the end, after several months'* (Mrs JJ, b.1903). This post, as secretary to the managing director of two local newspapers, was secured as a result of her being recommended by her friend, who was the newspaperman's next-door-neighbour. This was the only job she ever held: she left after eight years, *'to get married and in order to start a family'*.²⁰⁵

Those born later in the century fared a little better: *'I wrote to Huntley and Palmers for an interview, and was given a job in the wages office for 17 shillings a week (16 shillings and a ha'penny after deductions)'* (Mrs TT, b.1921). As a result of the increase in demand for clerical workers brought about by the Second World War, many found it was easier to find work – albeit as non-permanent employees – due to the exodus of young men into the Services. One woman's route to a job with the Great Western Railway (GWR) came about when some people who were billeted at her house after the GWR's evacuation from Paddington to Reading said *'Oh come and work with us. So I just wrote for an interview and was put into the Accounts office'* (Mrs PP, b.1921). One school-leaver was despatched to her local Youth Employment Bureau in 1934:

I kept going down and there didn't seem to be anything very special but there again it was a matter of luck – it's who you know.... I was at school with the park-keeper's daughter and ... he knew everybody ... and [a man he knew] wanted a girl to do the clerical work ... and he said well my daughter knows someone ... so I was sent over for the interview and I got the job! At ten shillings a week! (Mrs NN, b.1920).

Another, after a spell of unemployment, was told by her friend that because the latter had fallen over and hurt her leg, she could not continue in her job. My informant then applied to that girl's company, and they said *'Oh yes, just what we want. It was hard on Ivy – but I was lucky'* (Miss CC, b. 1921). A few women obtained work in the same organisation in which an older sister was already employed. Mrs GG (b.1921), for example, went into the Civil Service *'because my sister, who was four years older, was already in it'*. Another woman went to work as the junior in the same commercial firm as her sister: *'There was a job going at this wholesale grocers, where my sister was in charge of the office, and so I went ... and I got the job'* (Mrs LL, b.1919). Mrs SS (b.1924) found a job with the Westminster Bank as soon as she left school at age 17, but remained 'temporary staff' until she

was called up in 1943. Mrs AA was one of the few who actively chose to work in an office, rather than drifting into one: *'I learnt shorthand at school, and I took to it - I liked it. ... And I wanted to leave school so my parents said ... we'll send you to Taylor and East [local private college] ... I just wanted to go into an office'* (Mrs AA, b.1921). After marriage, this woman used her skills by acting as her husband's unpaid secretary.

For girls from upper-middle-class homes, a full-time secretarial course was often the only acceptable alternative to higher education – or perhaps librarianship, a possibility which led to the mother of one such girl protesting: *'Librarians! [You'll] never get married if you're a librarian! Thick shoes and glasses!'* (Mrs DD, b.1928), a memory which had my informant laughing delightedly. Both Mrs DD and Miss KK (b.1927) had attended a prestigious residential secretarial college, evacuated to the country for the duration of the war, which their parents felt was *'similar to a finishing-school'*.²⁰⁶ There were indications, during these interviews, that office life did not always fit comfortably with the girls' previous experiences. One remarked – in a tone of disbelief – that *'there was a huge typing room, with all these girls ... [laughs] and then there would be a coffee break and they would all put down their typing stuff, and get out their knitting'*. She herself was *'a complete rare bird because I had shorthand'*. In another (temporary) job, when taking dictation from her boss who offered to spell 'counsel' for her, she said *'Look, I don't think you need I had five great-uncles all called to the Bar'* (Miss KK, b.1927).

Horizons were narrower for some daughters, and the lack of individual interest in them on the part of their schools was particularly sad. *'When it was time to leave [grammar school] we were told that exam results would not be known until after we had started back, so I left in case I hadn't passed. I had obtained Matric Exemption but it was too late then. My mother had worked in insurance and that was what I was told to do! ... I think I wrote to the Pearl, and worked there in High Holborn...'* (Mrs BB, b.1923).

6.8 Working Lives

Once the women had secured employment, it would seem that many found a considerable degree of enjoyment from their working lives. From today's perspective, their hours of work seem long, and conditions in many of the offices spartan, yet at that time, they apparently made few comparisons with more congenial situations. Often, the informants would mention the poor environmental conditions in which they worked, yet invariably indicated that they took this in their stride: *'sometimes it was so cold in these huts (I think there must have been radiators somewhere, I don't know) that we*

used to bring flowerpots and put a candle inside and put our feet on! ‘ a comment made immediately after saying what ‘*great fun*’ this job had been for this woman (Mrs PP, b.1921).

Office work for many of the others was also recalled as a period of ‘great fun’. Of course, as young single girls they were not yet encumbered by the demands of husbands and children, or with homes to run; but pleasure in the *cameraderie* they experienced through work, not the freedom from responsibility, characterised their recollections. This was especially true of the war years: ‘*I enjoyed the friendliness of the others ... we were all in it together ... all falling flat on the floor when a doodlebug fell nearby*’ (Mrs BB, b.1923). Another said: ‘*I had an absolutely splendid time. We lived at the Shell residential club ... so we had a most terrific social life. No way did I wish I’d been a librarian!*’ (Mrs DD, b.1928). Some also spoke warmly of friendships with colleagues which they had retained from those early days, even exchanging visits with women who now live abroad, for example in Canada. Two of the women had met their future husbands through their jobs.

Others recalled incidents which pointed to the cultural differences between office personnel: ‘*The young girl who worked at the desk opposite me swore like a trooper. I’d never heard anyone swear before, let alone a young girl. One day this girl said that I was “good for her” and when I asked why she replied that she didn’t swear as much as before I came!*’ (Mrs BB, b.1923). A woman who worked in a small office, with only herself and her boss, found her fun by attending local evening classes for three years, with the same set of people: ‘*We did shorthand-typing, English and dramatic English which was lovely. We all knew one another, and then you got to know other people, who came from other areas*’ (Mrs NN, b.1920). She added that ‘*if you attended every class, you got your half-crown back! ... The second year [1938] I got awarded what they called a studentship to university evening classes, but I didn’t take it up, because I didn’t want to leave all my friends you see*’ (*ibid.*). Mrs UU (b.1919) was ‘*happy at work, although I still wished I could have stayed on at school. I stayed at the firm for nine years, and only left when I was expecting my first child*’. Asked about the people with whom she worked, Mrs PP (b.1921) was enthusiastic: ‘*They were fun! See, we were young. ... you met [other people] on the staff trains, and there were fields round our huts, so we had hockey matches, and cricket matches, and swam in the canal. It was great. And we made the tea on a fire out in the fields. I mean, you can’t imagine it - this was an office!! Oh, great fun. ...*’

The women who worked as secretaries spoke less of the fun they experienced with colleagues than of the qualities (or otherwise) of the men for whom they worked. The pleasure obtained from their work was partly linked to the degree of responsibility which they were accorded, but more specifically to the sense of

worth which their bosses' approbation gave them. There may also, for some women, have been the satisfying of a mothering instinct. Benét (1972) suggests that older, usually single, secretaries may play a subconscious 'nanny' rôle; but this is an aspect of the secretary's position which is surely not confined to a particular age-group. People do like to feel 'needed' – and a boss who offers some recognition of the ways in which he relies on his secretary is clearly valued. One interviewee, after she had listed the many aspects of her job which she enjoyed, recognised such feelings. She summed up by saying that she liked to '*... look after him generally. I suppose it was the mother instinct in me!*' (Mrs EE, b.1923). Another invariably wrote her boss's letters for him. That he acknowledged her skill was important to her: he had '*joked I write quite a good letter, don't I?*' and in relating this to me, Mrs OO indicated that she took pleasure in this compliment, over sixty years later (Mrs OO, b.1913). Being a 'small cog' could nevertheless bring rewards: '*I was a little kingpin really, being the only secretary ...*' (Mrs FF, b.1930). Amongst the more unusual spin-offs from being 'the secretary' which were felt to be enjoyable were those recounted by the oldest interviewee: '*The MD's wife also came to work there sometimes. ... They went skating in office time, and once they took me with them. Also, some time later, they took me to Hayling Island for a weekend, where they had a bungalow!*' (Mrs JJ, b.1903).

With few exceptions, the jobs which the case study women held were unlikely to lead to any significant career advancement, or even progression within an organisation. Nor were the women *seeking* such advancement, since the majority admitted to thinking that this was a temporary stage in their lives. Marriage, and children, would follow, and become their 'full-time job'. It is important to remember that during the hundred years covered by this study, women's place was seen primarily as 'in the home': and, economic necessity notwithstanding, the status of a married woman was far greater than the status of a 'spinster'. The attitude that single women had *no* status was memorably depicted by Jane Austen's character, the empty-headed 16-year-old Lydia, who after her premature marriage remarked to her eldest sibling: 'Ah! Jane, I take your place now, and you must go lower, because I am a married woman' (Austen 1972:329). This attitude was still detectable in the twentieth century.

Sanderson's study of female Civil Servants, who were from a similar age-group to those in my study, also drew attention to the way that many women 'believe themselves to be improving their position in some way' by entering the married state. She suggests that 'these apparent gains are linked to the idea of autonomy, which is usually associated with higher status', adding that

by getting married they gained their own household, their own terrain, and one not dominated by their mothers. ... They set about their new career with enthusiasm and intelligence, becoming 'scientifically managing' housekeepers rather than 'scientifically managed' routine clerks. It is true that they had lost their independent income, but for most of them this was never at their total disposal anyway. Even when

they were employed all of them gave most of their earnings to their mother and received 'pocket money' back from her. For all these reasons, marriage was seen as an improvement in status and none of the women (certainly at the time) regretted their apparent loss of (economic) independence. (Sanderson 1988:50-1).

Many of the women interviewed for the present study commented on similar economic aspects: those who had to leave school to start work knew that their families needed their financial contributions, therefore they took it for granted that the greater proportion of their earnings 'belonged' to the family. As with the women in Sanderson's sample, a number of my informants then received 'pocket money', although one woman was allowed to keep half her earnings. She '*carefully budgeted*' this: for example '*National Savings, spending money, clothes and holidays*' (Mrs AA, b.1921). Those informants whose families were in a better financial position did not volunteer information regarding any contribution to the family income; however, one of these – a spinster – did comment on the need to earn enough to support *herself*, and as a result took some residential jobs both in England and abroad.

The failure of women white-collar workers to achieve 'top' positions, as well as such women's apparent lack of ambition to do so, has been investigated by Crompton and Sanderson, who sought external explanations for such phenomena. They have noted that 'economic, political and ideological factors are interrelated in the creation of the empirical reality of both gender and employment relations'. In their study of 'gendered jobs', sex rôle theory, human capital theory, labour market segmentation, and patriarchal exclusion were all cited as likely causal explanations for the type of occupational segregation experienced by their respondents (Crompton and Sanderson 1990:160). The present study does not purport to test such theories against the employment histories of my interviewees, but there are certainly aspects of each explanation in their stories which bear out these researchers' claim that 'once women have moved into the public sphere, gender becomes a segregating mechanism; economic stratification has become gendered' (Crompton and Sanderson *ibid.*:182). Labour market segmentation, particularly in the field of clerical and secretarial work was, by the time my informants entered the labour market, clearly delineated in gender terms: in addition, patriarchy - dominance by the male - which was such a feature of the Victorian era, had scarcely been eroded. Women were still as likely to be allocated a subordinate rôle in the public sphere as in the private, a situation which would be perpetuated if they were launched onto the labour market with fewer (or less marketable) qualifications than their brothers. Their resultant lack of ambition is the culmination of these factors.

Four of the twenty-one women in the sample remained single throughout their lives, and were entirely dependent on their earnings; one married for the first time in her forties, and one other was married (and widowed) twice. Of the rest, only two had husbands living at the time of interview (these were the two youngest interviewees). A minority of the married women held full-time posts during their husbands' lifetimes, although many did take part-time work 'once the children were at school'. Two eventually gained

degrees as mature students, after which they took teaching posts. The four women who were still single at the time of interview had all continued to earn their own living until retirement age. Two of these remained in the same organisation throughout their working lives: one in the offices of the biscuit manufacturer, Huntley and Palmers, the other in the Civil Service. In each of these cases, although the women achieved promotion (as far as supervisory levels) and pay rises within that time, neither reached top management.

It was apparent that many of the women were highly intelligent and, had they been born even twenty years later, might have gone on from school to further or higher education. That they did not was not only because of their families' economic circumstances but also the conventions of the era: for example in 1938-39 only 23 per cent of full-time students in United Kingdom higher-education establishments were female (and the majority of those were training for teaching), constituting a mere one per cent of all females aged 18-20 (Halsey 1972:217, Table 7.8). As a result, many of these young workers embarked upon menial work, without the opportunity of promotion to managerial positions, receiving cut-rate wages. What is surprising is that so many of them did it with good grace, summed up in the comment '*I was very naïve, not very adventurous ... we were very biddable in those days*' (Miss KK, b.1927).

Even by the turn of the nineteenth/twentieth century, typists recognised that they were 'not going anywhere' in terms of a career ladder, and some women Civil Servants were eventually mobilised to register their dissatisfaction with the situation. When giving evidence to a government Commission held during 1912-1915, for example, the women's representative stated that typists were unhappy with their situation. One historian reported that

... the typist staff had begun to make demands for admission to other ranks of the Civil Service and, in giving evidence before the MacDonnell Commission their representative stated that the typists felt the need for a wider outlet. They considered that the prospects of promotion were poor and that they should have the same chance as boy clerks of passing on into other classes of the public service. The 'female typewriter' was beginning to feel, and to wish it publicly known, that she was not only a machine (Martindale 1938:68-9).

Martindale added that the push for wider opportunities for women in the Civil Service continued well into the twentieth century, but although the Treasury's Permanent Secretary thought that 'the women had done very well in the spheres in which they had been occupied, he was still afraid of "outmarching public opinion" and so would prefer to follow, rather than lead it' (Martindale *ibid.*:70).

A different view - that shorthand-typing offered many young girls 'an avenue into a world they would otherwise never see' - was put forward by Benét, who wrote in somewhat cynical terms about the secretarial world, which she subtitled an 'enquiry into the female ghetto'. Such work offered 'a form of contact with powerful, interesting men they would never otherwise meet', and she considered that 'lots of

them are doing just about as well as any woman, anywhere, can expect to do' (Benét 1972:10). It must be borne in mind, however, that Benét was reporting on an era which came after that in which the majority of my informants were employed. The status of office work did not remain static during the first half of the twentieth century: as has been noted elsewhere in this study, by the 1960s and early '70s – the time about which Benét was writing – shorthand-typing and secretarial posts proliferated and the demand for such operators outstripped the supply. Many young girls were able to command disproportionately high salaries at that stage. Thus, in spite of the fact that two of Benét's interviewees married their boss, as did one of my informants, many of her observations have less relevance for my sample than for my informants' daughters. Nevertheless her survey did mirror the views quoted above that some of the intrinsic rewards stemmed from the relationship the women had with their bosses: women were still finding 'consolation' through secretarial posts, if working for 'a man they respect, admire, and learn from. ... He has access to the corridors of power' (although she added the *caveat* that 'too many bosses ... are too insecure themselves to help their secretaries'). She also agreed that 'the girl gang' at the office could be a source of 'fun' (Benét 1972:24-25). And as one of my informants remarked, many women enjoyed the opportunity to exercise their nurturing instincts through '*looking after*' their boss: the '*mother instinct*' took over (Mrs EE, b.1923).

Those women who experienced a longer working life, for example the spinsters in my sample, as well as those who for other reasons returned to work, were able to recognise the changes which had taken place since their first entry into the employment market, not least in the levels of remuneration. One married informant returned to part-time employment when her children grew up, and remarked that she then earned only a pound less per week than she had in the same job, ten years earlier, as a full-time secretary. She also commented on the way that employers now had to '*hold the jobs open for you*' when women took maternity leave (Mrs HH, b.1928).

The 'nurturing' aspect of the secretary's rôle was being stressed in many of the books aimed at aspiring secretarial workers which flooded the market in the middle years of the twentieth century, that period when demand for shorthand-typists and secretaries outstripped supply. In contrast with the advice offered to Victorian young women in journals and careers guides, which emphasised the personal qualities which aspiring 'lady clerks' must demonstrate (see Chapter 5), books published in the 1950s and '60s concentrated on the servicing aspects which surrounded the rôle of secretary, and which therefore distinguished her from the run-of-the-mill shorthand-typist. 'You couldn't want to be anything more worth while and exciting than a secretary. A real secretary – in the true sense of that word; and it should be noted right from the outset that that is very different from being a shorthand-typist. Always remember that' (Hardwick-Smith and Rowe 1958:5, Foreword by Angus). Such 'little personal services' included 'sharpening his pencils, emptying his ashtray, and cleaning his telephone' – all before 'he' arrived in the morning (Hardwick-Smith and Rowe 1958:95). Most importantly, readers were informed, was the ability

'to anticipate your employer's wishes; to foresee what he wants, instead of waiting to be told; to think for him. In this way you can help him to become doubly capable in his work'. Such attentions to detail 'will help you to reach the top of your chosen career' (Hardwick-Smith and Rowe *ibid.*:112-3).

The 'top' of a secretarial career, however, is not as easily defined. As was apparent from the experiences of my informants, promotion and prestige for shorthand-typists were achieved *through one's boss's career*: he got promoted, and if you were good enough, you 'went with him'. It has always been very difficult for women to achieve a place on the board from a secretarial start. 'Once a secretary, always a secretary' is a familiar adage, and can be illustrated by the experiences of one of my informants, Mrs FF. This woman confided a particularly painful episode from her own career, at a time when she was the head of the Secretariat at a college of higher education, and was also teaching part-time. Her experience was so characteristic of the problems associated with women's attempts to transcend their clerical or secretarial labels that it is recounted here even though most of the other anecdotes in this study relate to the interviewees' earliest working lives:

Sometimes I think that secretarial skills are - could be - a trap. I've realised over the years now. ... I was one of a group of people representing each section of the college where I worked, and arrived a little late as I'd been held up in the traffic. I wasn't particularly late but everyone else had been there a little time before I'd arrived. They said Oh we're glad you're here. In your absence we voted that you would be the secretary. And my heart sank at that point, because I don't know why it should be so - there was my labour, and that was what I was supposed to do. I wanted to have an input as I was supposed to. But there I was, sitting with my head down, taking the minutes. And if I did have an input, people looked at me aghast! So when the trolley came from the catering department with the afternoon tea or coffee or whatever, I had to serve it. Nobody else did. I suppose I was just used to the rôle, I know now. ... But I think sometimes well, that you can't get beyond the feeling of where you are, like the old retainer. ... I don't think the vice-principal quite understood how women felt, certainly about me doing ... I didn't really mind doing the coffee, but really doing the secretarial bit when that wasn't why I was there, really did stick in my craw. (Mrs FF, b.1930)²⁰⁷

Other women have found that in order to gain greater occupational fulfilment, they had to leave behind their secretarial roots, and embark on different (even if equally stereotypical) careers. Many (myself included) moved into teaching; others into authorship or journalism, or sometimes more public rôles as a result of their exceptional shorthand or typewriting speeds like Marion Angus (see EN.195). Angus painted a rosy picture of the secretary's life during the 1950s: 'Being a secretary can be a magic carpet, an open

TABLE 6.4

Examples of Range of Work Done by Informants Subsequent to First Employment

Codename	Work experiences mentioned during interviews/questionnaires
Mrs AA	Mainly helping husband with his insurance agency work (at home)
Mrs BB	P.A. to Staff Office, Air Ministry; Pearl Insurance; ran hairdressing salon; took computer course at age 70, whilst employed by engineering firm (invoicing)
Miss CC	Book-keeper, accounts clerk, comptometer machine operator for various employers
Mrs DD	Ceased all paid employment four years after marriage (then had five children)
Mrs EE	Part-time secretary Barclays Bank after son born; agency temp. (secretarial); similar in London engineering company, and then for Rank Organisation film studios. Worked most of adult life. Loved secretarial work, ' <i>but I would loved to have gone to university. My father couldn't have afforded it</i> '.
Mrs FF	After motherhood, secretary in further and higher education colleges, also in schools. Taught secretarial subjects after taking Open University degree aged 40+
Mrs GG	Returned part-time to Civil Service when husband disabled. After being widowed, worked as telephonist/clerk. Worked as head's clerk in a primary school and encouraged by head to do mature student's maths. degree course. After that taught in primary schools until retirement
Mrs HH	Worked as secretary to Company Secretary in same commercial company where husband was a draughtsman. After having children returned part-time as Managing-Director's secretary, then full-time when her children went to school, until retirement
Mrs II	Worked as shorthand-typist for Home Guard throughout the war. Helped husband run a smallholding whilst bringing up four children. After being widowed in 1960 worked full-time for BBC as secretary in engineering department
Mrs JJ	Did not do any paid work after marriage/children
Miss KK	Shorthand-typist/secretarial work all her life: initially in London, then Cheltenham. Medical secretary at hospital in Oxford. Spent time as <i>au pair</i> in Italy, then after working at English language school in London became secretary for United Nations in Switzerland; medical secretary in Italy and in London
Mrs LL	Cashier with wholesale company until marriage, then clerk with Ministry of Food during the war; suffered a nervous breakdown and later worked as a cleaner for university hall of residence. After husband's death worked as filing clerk in Army Records Office until needed to care for her mother

/continued

TABLE 6.4 [continued]

Examples of Range of Work Done by Informants Subsequent to First Employment

Codename	Work experiences mentioned during interviews/questionnaires
Mrs MM	Temporary clerk with civil service, working for army, until marriage. No further information
Mrs NN	After having children, no clerical work but was piano accompanist for a dance school (and currently is still doing that on a voluntary basis). Since being widowed, has travelled a lot for example to visit a pen friend in Texas. Contributed to a book on local history, and is a member of the Women's Institute
Mrs OO	Continued to work as shorthand-typist or secretary throughout life (married but no children): initially for Huntley and Palmers. After the war, worked for a government Health Department, then for her own father. For many years, Private secretary to a director Huntley and Palmers, but based at his home. Also secretarial work at the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, then different departments at Reading University. Retired aged 52 and did typing work at home
Mrs PP	Worked for the railway most of her life; married her widowed boss when over age 40 then gave up work to care for her elderly parents
Miss QQ	Civil servant all her working life, retiring at the statutory age.
Mrs RR	After raising children, returned to work as receptionist-typist at insurance company, then as clerk-typist working until age 68 for large financial services company
Mrs SS	War service included employment as draughtswoman in previously all-male office which researched radar. Returned to shorthand-typing as bank manager's secretary after raising two daughters, then promoted to district manager's P.A. and stayed until retiring age (she was widowed in 1981 and was responsible for financing two daughters through university)
Miss TT	Worked as clerk in wages department at Huntley and Palmers for 43 years (to retirement age). After interruption for war service in ATS was eventually promoted to office manageress, with considerable responsibility for PAYE, insurance contributions and cash for the company
Mrs UU	Always wanted to work with figures so double-entry book-keeping as cashier was interesting, although always regretted not being able to train as a teacher. After raising three children, only ever worked part-time in a range of unrelated jobs: garden centre, mail order companies, football pools collector over a period of 32 years. Was secretary of village club for 12 years. (This woman had taken the scholarship examination at age 9 but ' <i>as all the others were 10 or 11 they had nowhere to put me. After I took it the next year and again passed, my teachers wanted me to take the exams for Christ's Hospital school at Herstmonceux but my parents could not have afforded this. At the end of term exams at the grammar school I was the only person who had ever had a complete maths paper right</i> ' (Mrs UU, b.1919)

sesame, to a life full of interest – a life with a complete fulfilment...’ (Hardwick-Smith and Rowe 1958:6, Foreword by Angus). However, unlike the Victorians, many who did grasp additional entrepreneurial opportunities for example through the provision of shorthand-typewriting services, the majority of twentieth-century secretaries would find few opportunities for enterprise or perhaps even real job satisfaction.

Thus, whilst Victorian young women viewed office work as the answer to ‘the woman problem’ (see Chapter 5), as for a while at least it was a very acceptable means by which they could achieve economic self-sufficiency, by the end of the first quarter of the twentieth century this very saviour had been degraded by the sobriquet ‘women’s work’, and was therefore a means of keeping women firmly in their place as ‘substitute wives’, once more subservient to the male (Benét 1972:62-87).

It may well be true that during the nineteenth century ‘the introduction of the type-writer ... [had] created a need, and women of education [were] peculiarly fitted to supply it’ (Harrison 1888:349), but during the next century women eventually woke up to the reality that secretarial work, where ‘women of education’ were required to ‘look like a girl, think like a man, and work like a horse’ (Hardwick-Smith and Rowe *op.cit.* 1958:5 Foreword), was certainly not a guaranteed route to the boardroom. As thousands of women have since discovered, even at the turn of the century it was already very difficult to break away from the ‘only a typist (or secretary)’ label, as Janet Courtney has reported. When she was working as a translator for the Secretary to the Royal Commission on Labour, ‘the Government’s motto was once a typist always a typist’ (Courtney 1926:142).²⁰⁸

6.9 Work and Marriage

Earlier chapters have drawn attention to the imbalance in the numbers of females and males in the population in the nineteenth century. Even as late as 1881 there were one million more women than men (Roberts 1988:15), but this situation had changed by the time my informants were born, and a life as a spinster was no longer considered inevitable for many. In 1911, for example, under fifty-six per cent of women aged 25-29 were married; but by 1951 that figure had increased to seventy-seven per cent (Rollett and Parker 1972:43 in Halsey (ed) 1972; and see Holcombe 1973:217). As will have been apparent from some of the quoted comments of the informants, women of the generation surveyed for this study saw their work as of secondary importance to their ‘main’ career, marriage, and the raising of a family, or sometimes as carers for dependent relatives. Although my study did not set out to report on the informants’ complete life stories, nevertheless many of the women have provided insights into aspects of their marriages which impacted upon their working lives, or thwarted their ambitions. Whilst my questions to them had focused mainly on their *entry* to employment (Table 6.3), some of the additional information they offered is presented in Table 6.4, giving a glimpse of the ways in which women’s choices can be constrained by the

demands of marriage and motherhood. The Victorian pioneers recognised that work can be intrinsically rewarding for women - not just a means of satisfying a financial need – but few of my informants had the opportunity to follow their personal ambitions.

Reflections of Victorian cultural norms were detectable in my informants' attitudes to marriage. There was general acceptance amongst the cohort that, once married, their husbands' wishes and needs would be paramount: and the women appeared to take for granted that the rest of their lives would follow that pattern. Mrs AA: *'It was something you just didn't think about. Your place was in the home in those days - running the home, and doing the chores and all the rest of it. When your husband came in, there was the meal'* (laughs). Asked whether she felt happy about that situation, she responded rather hesitantly:

Well, I don't think - I suppose in a way - it was - expected of me - it was a thing that ladies did in those days, and you just didn't think twice about it, whether it was right or wrong. You had your family and that was it - that was your job then, to look after the home and the children and the rest of it. (Mrs AA, b.1921)

Mrs JJ, the middle-class centenarian, was shocked at the idea that she might have remained at her secretarial job after marriage: *'I left - ! Married women didn't work!'* and she added *'I didn't know any other married girl who worked.'*²⁰⁹

A typical experience was to work until the first child was expected, and then, if returning to paid work at all, to take part-time or 'fill-in' jobs after the youngest child reached the age of about ten. The pervading view of office work being a job for the young, single woman, and teaching as suitable for 'mothers', is encapsulated in a quotation from the handbook for aspiring office workers published in the 1960s, referred to elsewhere in this study. It contains the passage:

As you get a little older you might like to think of taking up teaching either typewriting or shorthand. ... teaching is a very suitable profession for married women, and it is worth considering if you feel that you would like to continue with a career after marriage and find that being married handicaps you in applying for the more responsible jobs in an office' (Leafe 1964:147)

One respondent who had admitted to having originally wanted to be a school teacher never did fulfil that ambition (Mrs UU, b.1919). Although she needed to earn money at various stages in her married life, all the jobs she had carried out indicated that she did not capitalise on her intellectual potential through a career. She listed part-time assistant at a garden centre; working for two mail-order firms for a few years; and becoming a football pools collector. She was involved in a range of voluntary work, for example by

becoming the secretary of the village club. This type of outlet was also a feature of other women's post-motherhood years. In these ways many were able to put to good use their organisational abilities as well as their acquired skills. One informant (Mrs OO, now aged 90) still arranges events, and types up the minutes for the social club she runs at her sheltered-accommodation block of flats. This picture is a reversal of that of the mid-nineteenth-century SPEW committee women, who having had an 'apprenticeship' in philanthropy were able to put such experiences to good use once the world of work was opened to them.

A brief insight into marital relationships was provided by Mrs BB, who was married to a man who did not want her to go back to work. His control extended to other aspects of their lives together. At one point in their marriage, she wanted to go to evening classes to brush up her French; and although her husband didn't actually forbid her to go, she said he '*always seemed to make a fuss such as having a headache, or some other reason, why [she] either couldn't go, or felt badly about going. So I soon gave it up.*' But when her husband died in 1981 at the age of 61, she took on a full-time office job, aged 58, and then worked until she was 72 years old. This latter period of employment was very enjoyable, as her two bosses were '*similar ages to my sons and we became good friends*', and when she left, one of them remarked that he '*never thought it would work, but it's been marvellous ... and Carole (his fiancée) had nothing to worry about!*' (Mrs BB, b.1923).²¹⁰

Sometimes, the family's economic needs transcended any chauvinist attitudes. One married woman who worked part-time after her only child was at school, subsequently returned to full-time work when the boy was older, and her husband did not object to the arrangement, as '*we hadn't got a lot of money ... and I wanted to get some money together ...*' (Mrs EE, b.1923). She continued to work for the bank to which she had returned as a secretary, eventually leaving at the age of 52. Another married woman – Mrs OO (b.1913), the only one to remain childless - worked until she was in her sixties.²¹¹ The only other married woman who had worked for such an extended period was the informant who didn't marry until she was in her forties. She had cared for her parents until they were well over eighty, even after her marriage to her widowed boss (who had been the accountant in her section of the GWR at Paddington).

The one interviewee who spoke warmly of her husband's encouragement for her to do work which interested her was, perhaps significantly, the youngest in the cohort. Although technically within the age group targeted for this study, she is closer to a post-war generation of women than to the majority here, in terms of her working life, her personal achievements, and the social climate in which she operated. Not only was her husband supportive of her wish to work full-time during their children's school years, but she reported that it was due to his encouragement and practical assistance that she was able to embark on an Open University degree in 1972, a process which took six years. '*He would record things in the middle of the night ... we had a portable TV which we put in the car if we went on a shopping trip, and when it came time for my programme, about half past three, we'd go*

TABLE 6.5
The Changing Composition of Office Employment, 1870-1950

	1870-1898	1899-1939	1940-1950
SIZE OF BUSINESS	small, few employees in each, often only one clerk	comparatively small; virtually no direct contact between lower-level clerks and top management; hierarchical structures appearing	larger companies; clear demarcation between workers and management, and between employees in different sections; physical separation within office accommodation between workforce and management
ETHOS	daily interaction; relationship of trust between clerk and employer, or clerks and their principals	system of 'requirements of staff', even codified rules beginning to appear, replacing one-to-one personal relationships	job descriptions, employment contracts and induction into roles; delineation of tasks (division of labour)
ORGANISATION	limited range of functions: copying clerk, book-keeper, office boy or general clerk, but opportunity for advancement (for males)	size of organisations increasing eg Civil Service, banks, insurance companies, manufacturers - leading to specialisation, and increased division of labour	proliferation of companies of all sizes: great increase in volume of clerical work; rapid increase in number of women employed; categorisation clearer eg invoice clerk; shorthand typist; secretary
GENDER BALANCE	very few women engaged in paid clerical employment although numbers beginning to increase after about 1880; women paid less than men	numbers of women increasing but still in minority, and women paid less; some entrepreneurial opportunities; supervisory opportunities (but only of other women and girls); over-supply of typists	gender balance shifting: women replacing men (eg military service); greatly increased demand for clerical workers alongside better-qualified female school-leavers: polarisation of males/females apparent in management structures; women paid less than men
EQUIPMENT	few mechanical aids; most documents hand-written but typewriters appearing after 1882	increased use of 'mechanical aids' - invariably seen as 'women's work' eg transcribing from dictation machines; telegraphs telephones, or typewriters	rapid proliferation of equipment in offices: duplicating, photo-copying, adding and calculating, punched cards, tape recorders, continuous stationery, addressographs
UNIONISATION; WORKING CONDITIONS	no workers' combinations; no protective legislation for clerical employees	workers' associations emerging for clerical staff; competitive entry replacing patronage	growth of unions. Entry requirements and qualifications beginning to be required for appointment and for promotional purposes
MARRIED WOMEN	very few married women working in white-collar occupations; also comparatively few single or widowed women	more common for married women as well as single to seek work outside the home; but still very unlikely to combine motherhood with employment	women no longer required to resign on marriage (eg banks, Civil Service) but still have to forfeit pensionable status; society still 'frowning' upon working mothers (eg 'latchkey children' pitied)
SOCIAL CLASS	most clerks drawn from lower-middle-class backgrounds; jobs allocated on basis of personal contacts or patronage; women clerical employees drawn from middle-class families only	status of clerical workers now more ambiguous as a result of changes in educational system (eg larger number from working-class homes as all children better educated); consequent erosion of status of clerk	Registrar-General's classification of occupations puts clerks and secretarial staff in Class III (non-manual, but also non-professional); white-collar, not 'blue collar' classification

back to the car park, plug in the TV, watch my programme and then continue with the shopping. So he was a great support (Mrs FF, b.1930). This woman was also anxious to represent her mother as being unusual in her generation, and wanted to make sure that her daughter had opportunities to succeed through employment. She said *'How can I explain my mother to you? She was a feminist before feminism was even a word I had heard of ... she was really a very strong person'* (Mrs FF, b.1930). The terms 'feminism' and 'strong person' were juxtaposed in a derogatory sense by the nineteenth-century media, yet here they were represented as admirable attributes.

The ideology of equality which the first-wave feminists had propounded had, it seems, been overturned for this generation: or at the very least, was considered irrelevant. Hannam has provided a commentary on a possible explanation, by drawing attention to a study of women in inter-war Britain. The sacrifices made by servicemen during the First World War, together with a 'heightened awareness of class and the subsequent problems of unemployment' were all too familiar to my informants' parents, and 'sex-based demands' were thus seen as 'petty and uncharitable' (Hannam 1995:234). She suggests that a backlash against women resulted in a reversion to the separate spheres approach which 'limited women's scope as much as had the institutional barriers of the nineteenth century' (Hannam 1995:234). My informants' stories appear to bear out this assessment. As experienced by my informants, the nature of office work had also changed by the time they were employed (see Table 6.5).

6.10 Additional Insights Into Office Life

There is at least one study of female office workers which purports to have uncovered a 'dimension of office life which has been greatly overlooked by sociological studies – that is, sexual interaction' (McNally 1979:181). My questioning of informants did not attempt to focus on that aspect of their experiences, yet it was clear to me during some of the conversations with the women that there was an unspoken recognition that the dynamics of office life were frequently enlivened by what might be construed as sexual undercurrents.²¹² Frequently, a woman would indicate that an otherwise mundane or boring job was made interesting due to the personality of the man for whom she was working, and her regard for him. McNally suggests that 'it is at least possible that some women derive job satisfaction not simply from levels of remuneration, or from the character of work itself, but also from the rewards which may attach to a conspicuous deference to masculine authority' (McNally *ibid.*:182).

During the 1920s/30s, human relations theorists highlighted the intrinsic satisfactions which people derive from work, noting that for many 'the existence of cohesive bonds between co-workers is a prerequisite for high morale and optimum performance' (Pringle 1989:87, quoting Rose 1975). Office flirtations are a well-recognised phenomenon, even if not (as far as I am aware) the subject of sociological theses. McNally has further suggested that

a woman's femininity is frequently exploited ... but it can also represent an important power resource with which to manipulate the boss. His superordinate status ... depends partly on the woman's willingness to adopt a posture of submissiveness. In this way ... [the display of subordination] may promote the private feeling that one is actually the power behind the throne... [I]f one ignores gender-based interaction in the office, one is likely to overlook the possible significance of sexual liaisons. There can be little doubt that members of the office do enter into sexual relationships ... ranging from mild flirtations to alliances of a more adulterous nature ... (McNally *ibid.*:182-3).

Some studies, based on the Parsonian distinction between expressive and instrumental sex-rôle orientations, indicate that there is a gender difference in the views each sex holds regarding work.²¹³ Women workers are said to be more likely to be drawn to the workplace by 'a quest for congenial social relationships', whilst men would be 'preoccupied by money, power and status' (McNally *ibid.*:184). The women in my study were not *initially* drawn to the workplace for congenial company – rather, it was economic necessity - but it would seem that what kept most of them in a particular job, or caused them to leave it, were indeed expressive, rather than instrumental, considerations.

The rewards of work which were recalled so many decades later indicate their importance to the informant. Mrs BB told me that when she was working for an insurance company before her marriage, she knew all the customers' reference numbers by heart, and derived a great deal of satisfaction from knowing that she was able to do her job well. She had also received a compliment from her boss, in which she took pride even now: she asked him once if he'd finished checking some figures she'd prepared, and he said '*We're kindred spirits - I don't check yours!*' (Mrs BB, b.1923) I found this woman's life history to be particularly moving, as not only had she been denied real opportunities to fulfil her obvious academic potential, but she had also experienced many personal tragedies. These included early widowhood, a stillborn baby, the loss of her brother (who had survived the war only to be drowned trying to save someone's life three years later), and caring for her father who suffered from Alzheimer's disease. She also brought up a daughter and five sons.

The emphasis on a secretary's femininity – that is, the concentration on those characteristics which made her attractive to *men* - was very apparent during the mid-twentieth-century period, when aspiring secretaries or shorthand-typists were the focus of a range of publications aimed at improving their chances of job success by focusing on their personal hygiene and appearance. Advice manuals advocated that a secretary should attempt to achieve 'the perfect balance between appearing attractive and competent', and that she must ensure that 'all her bodily functions are in good working order' (McNally 1979:57).²¹⁴ One publication offered a checklist which included the questions 'Is your hair sparkling clean and free from dandruff? ... Do you see to it that your breath is clean and sweet smelling (especially after a meal with onions)? Do you bathe daily? Do you use a good deodorant every day? ... Are your clothes spotless and

TABLE 6.6

Summary of Informants' Personal History

Code	Date of Birth	Age in 2003 or S.	M. or W.	Father's occupation or other info.	Type of School	Age left School	Post-school full-time training	Part-time training	Age first employed	Town where employed	Type of company	Employed as	First rate of pay per annum	Age at marriage	Worked after marriage	Worked after motherhood	Ambitions or subsequent achievements	Reasons given for subsequent work/non-work experiences	KEY TO ABBREVIATIONS
AA Mrs	1921	82	W	Wages Clerk	Central	14	6 months	n/a	15	Reading	insurance	sh/typist	£40	24	yes	much later	none specified	happy to help husband	bk-kg book-keeping
BB Mrs	1923	80	W	London Fire Brigade	Catholic Grammar	16	no	shorthand e/c	16	London	insurance	typist	£50	23	no	yes	none specified	various family tragedies	C.S. civil service
CC Miss	1921	82	S	Blacksmith	Central	14	n/a	art at e/c	14	Reading	biscuit manufacturers	accounts clerk	£40	n/a	n/a	n/a	career in art: talented amateur sculptor; has exhibited	became family's breadwinner	dom.se. domestic science
DD Mrs	1928	75	M	gentleman farmer	Private (in Carlisle)	16	2 years resid. sh/typ	no	18	London	Shell Oil	secretary	£240	22	yes	no	to continue with career abroad no work after 4 yrs marriage	had five children	e/c evening class
EE Mrs	1923	80	W	Insurance	Convent	14	2 years Pitman's coll.	no	16	London	City bank	sh/typist	can't recall	20	couldn't - marriage bar	part-time, then full-time	longed to go to university	parents couldn't afford it	Germ. German
FF Mrs	1930	73	M	Territ. Army instructor	Church school	15	1 year secretarial	no	16	Thirsk	accountants'	typist	£50	20	yes	yes	eventually took GCSEs and then OU degree aged 40 plus	no opportunity when younger	M,W,S married, widowed or single
GG Mrs	1921	82	W	father died 1937	Grammar	16	one term in 6th form	no	16	Reading	GPO (Civil Service)	telephonist	£45	25	yes	yes	wanted to go to university; later degree course as mature stud.	father died suddenly 1937	n a not applicable
HH Mrs	1928	75	W	no info.	Grammar	16	no	2 years e/c sh/typ	16	Slough	underwear manufacturers	cost clerk	£50	26	yes	yes	office work all her life: no complaints	happy to work in same company as husband	resid. residential
II Mrs	1919	84	W	"absent"	Private and home tutors	16	no	shorthand via tutor	20	Reading	motor dealership	clerk/typist	can't recall	25	yes	yes	independence	marriage, children. Later worked as BBC secretary	secretl. secretarial
JJ Mrs	1903	100	W	professions	Grammar	18	university (Commerce)	no	21	Reading	editor of local newspapers	secretary	can't recall	28	yes	no	rejected teaching; but agreed to go on to higher education	family expectations: able to take Commerce course	sh/typ shorthand-typing
KK Miss	1927	76	S	Army Officer (Indian Army)	Private (India)	16	resid.dom.sc then secretl.	no	19	London	resid. Secl. college	secretary to principal	c.£300	n/a	n/a	n/a	none identified	expectation that she would work after secretarial trg	typ. typewriting
LL Mrs	1919	84	W	railwayman	Brighton & Hove H.S.	15	n/a	no	15	Worthing	wholesale grocers	cashier	£26	21	yes	yes	had ability to go on to HE but family thought it 'not for them'	experienced some snobbery at school	yrs. years
MM Mrs	1919	84	W	no info.	Grammar	15	6 months sh/typ.	no	16	Reading	Milk Marketing Board	clerk/typist	£50	21	yes	no	no choice then; cycled 6 miles each way to school and work	not encouraged by parents; & left job to care for mother	
NN Mrs	1920	83	W	adoptive mother dressmaker	Central	14	shorthand at school	sh/typ e/c	just 15	Reading	Friendly Society	typist	£26	24	Briefly	yes	wanted to join the WAAFs	against parents' wishes	
OO Mrs	1913	90	W	carpenter/ joiner	Christ's Hosp. scholar (bdg)	16	n/a	sh/typ + Germ.e/c	almost 17	Reading	Huntley & Palmers	clerk in buying dept	£52	26	yes	no children	hoped to go to university and train as librarian	school said teach languages but didn't want to teach	
PP Mrs	1921	82	W	total invalid; m-c backgrnd	Grammar	16	none	no	16	Reading	Boots the Chemists	apprentice beauty culture	none, as an apprentice	41	yes	no children	beautician training interrupted by war (not reserved occupation)	employed as Brit. Rail clerk. later married widowed boss	
QQ Miss	1923	80	S	no info. but elderly	Grammar	17	some typing at school	no	17	Reading; then London	Civil Service	clerk	less than men	n/a	n/a	n/a	too young to sit C.S. exams at first; later, took 'lower' exams	elderly parents; needed to support them	
RR Mrs	1925	78	W	no info.	Senior (Wales)	14	none	typing at e/c	14	Reading	shops; then B.R.	clerk/typist	can't recall	25	yes	eventually	2nd WW preempted any plans	later enjoyed office work	
SS Mrs	1924	79	W	widowed mother	Grammar	17	one term in 6th form	sh/typ at e/c	17	Reading	bank	clerk	£75	32	yes	yes	called up 1943: draughtswoman widowed 1981, Remarried.	after widowhood, worked to educate 2 daughters in H.E.	
TT Miss	1921	82	S	no info.	Grammar	17	none	typ. bk-kg. e/c	17	Reading	Huntley & Palmers	typist	£42	n/a	n/a	at H & P for 43 years	Was in Auxiliary Territorial Service for 4 yrs during War	became office manager at H & P - stayed 43 years	
UU Mrs	1919	84	W	not well off	Grammar	14	none	taught bk-kg by employer	14	Reading	shoe shop	cashier	can't recall	23	yes	eventually	wished to teach; good at maths	parents poor; had to leave	

free from perspiration odour? ... Do you shave underarms and legs regularly?' (reported by McNally 1979:57).²¹⁵ She also noted that Sir Gerald Nabarro, MP, had listed six qualities which his ideal secretary must have, the first of which was 'fragrance: an unsavoury secretary would render my work quite impossible' (McNally 1979:55).²¹⁶

As already noted, this aspect of my informants' office experiences was only indirectly touched upon during interviews, yet there were hints that many were conscious of their femininity in what was often a male-dominated environment.²¹⁷ Sometimes, women remarked on the lack of male colleagues from their own generation in their jobs during the war (because many of the men had been drafted into the Services): their male colleagues were either very young boys, or elderly men, so they saw themselves in sisterly or daughterly relationships. Nevertheless, the 'fun' aspect of their jobs reported by many of my informants could well have included a sexual dimension.

My informants were very conscious of the dress-codes associated with their rôles as office workers, and 'looking nice' might also be associated with 'appearing attractive'. The importance of dressing *appropriately* was often remarked upon, and it was interesting how much detail the individual informants recalled of the clothes they wore during those years, describing colours and style, even the cost of some of the items, and remembering the fun associated with choosing them.²¹⁸ The fashions of the times are also detectable in some of those descriptions: in addition to the ever-present greys or navy, tartan fabrics for skirts figured prominently in the women's recollections.

The final chapter reflects on the process through which my research has taken me, and offers an interpretation of the themes of autonomy, independence and empowerment which clerical work might have provided. Any continuities between the two centuries are highlighted, as are those aspects of office work which might constitute discontinuities for twentieth-century women.

PART FOUR

CHAPTER SEVEN

REFLECTIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

'Although previously unstudied ... records are released regularly, only rarely do newly available archives change historical assessment radically' (Jordanova 2000:23)

7.1 Introduction

In this final chapter, I reflect upon the journeys which I have made during the past three years, which have culminated in this thesis. After any form of travel, destinations do not always turn out exactly as envisaged, nor can a precise moment of arrival be guaranteed. During my three-year journey, some diversions were beyond my control – some roads were closed, or a side-road looked appealing and prompted a detour. Although my final destination was predetermined, a number of events occurred which made it necessary to rearrange the itinerary, in order that I might arrive 'on time'. Many of these have been mentioned in earlier chapters, and include the difficulties associated with acquiring certain data, an accident which put me out of commission for many weeks, and the unexpected closure of the Girton archive. In addition, I have experienced a number of other personal interruptions as a result of problems associated with the health and well-being of close family members (representing four generations). In spite of these distractions, I have maintained my consuming interest in my chosen topic, and have arrived at my destination on time.

My research proposal, drawn up more than three years ago, set out my plans for a comparative study of two separate eras of female clerical workers. The first question sought to identify the rôle of SPEW in the evolution of clerical work as an occupation for middle-class women; the second was intended to compare the continuities and discontinuities between the experiences of those women assisted by SPEW during the nineteenth century and a small sample of twentieth-century informants whose working lives had begun prior to the Second World War (see Chapter 2, 2.1). This chapter offers interpretations of, rather than conclusions about, the differences and similarities which I found. I reflect on the appropriateness and efficacy of my research questions for the enquiries I undertook, noting the ways in which my thinking has changed as a result of the process. For example, the concepts I set out with – autonomy, independence, empowerment – no longer seem as helpful as when I began the thesis. Similarly, the analytical categories 'continuities' and 'discontinuities' look different to me after the passage of time, and I consider greater interest now lies in their interstices.

7.2 Two Eras Compared

My study demonstrates that the economic imperatives which had spurred on first-wave feminists, such as those within SPEW, to open up new areas of employment for women, resulted in the establishment of a wide range of office-based activities from which women's eventual virtual monopoly of the clerical field has stemmed. I have established, in response to my first research question, that SPEW's archive does provide clear evidence of the Society's influential rôle in enabling women to engage in such work for the first time. Their determination to break down the barriers which previously existed is well documented within the archive, such as keeping women out of the various branches of the Civil Service or the printing trade, in addition to a range of other crafts. My thesis illustrates the ways in which these advances were achieved, and the individual contributions to the cause made by Committee members and their supporters. My research has also established that this small Society and its members have had a greater influence on aspects of the feminist movement than had previously been recognised, for example:

- the initial (substantial) financial contribution which launched Bodichon's and Taylor's suffrage petition through the Kensington Society was put up by Jessie Boucherett²¹⁹
- its Secretary Gertrude King's evidence to the Civil Service Royal Commission (see Chapter 4, 4.3) directly resulted in many additional clerical appointments for women
- the Society, and in particular Gertrude King, were consulted by many other individuals or organisations, and their views and recommendations regarding women's suitability for a variety of clerical work were published in 'careers guides' and newspaper articles (see Chapter 5)
- the Society facilitated the training of women in a number of occupations, often by setting up training offices (detailed in earlier chapters)
- the Society set up the first 'commercial school' in order to improve girls' arithmetical knowledge and their general education, which then became a model for others
- SPEW/SPTW were, and remain, the only similar organisation offering interest-free loans to women for training purposes

The legacy for twentieth-century workers offered by those pioneers is therefore of great importance even though, as might be claimed, 'progress' in the form of an expanded female clerical labour force might well have occurred eventually as a result of the increased demand which followed the upsurge in trade and commercial activity during the previous century. Moreover, at that time office-based work, unlike some other occupations (such as governess) offered Victorian women employment which did not require them to live away from home, enabled them to retain their 'genteel' image, and gave them the chance to make use of previously-untapped personal skills or talents.

Table 7.1 presents an overview of the main features of each era, but additional analysis is provided by the following bullet points:

7.2.1 Nineteenth Century

- the motivation for middle-class women to seek work was primarily economic necessity. There were many ‘superfluous’ women in the population - a demographic imbalance of thousands - and few ‘respectable’ ways for unsupported women to earn money, so there was a great need for additional openings
- SPEW made important contributions to breaking down the many barriers to getting women into new employments and became a respected public ‘voice’ and source of advice on such matters
- employers valued women’s capacity for neatness, patience and attention to detail such as was required in clerical work. Middle-class women were attracted to this because it did not mean living away from home; moreover, ordinary clothes could be worn, not the overalls or protective clothing which characterised the working classes
- the practice of segregating sexes in the workplace – and of chaperoning female employees - meant that strict social mores could be observed: gentlewomen’s ‘respectability’ was not compromised by working in offices
- middle-class *bona fides* were originally the main entry requirements for such employment – ie only the daughters of professional men were eligible
- a number of entrepreneurial opportunities opened up for some. As the expansion of business activity was so recent, the field was open, and many women benefited by setting up in business as employers or teachers of other women, with SPEW’s financial backing when necessary
- the Society actively engaged in improving women’s eligibility for employment, by providing instruction in arithmetic, book-keeping and so on
- breaking down the prejudices against middle-class women being remunerated for their labours was also amongst the campaigns in which SPEW was successful
- employers’ resistance to including women in their workforce, for fear of antagonising male workers, was gradually eroded, as were false assumptions about women’s physical disabilities to carry out certain tasks (such as lifting heavy ledgers)
- women were paid less than men for the same work, but whilst feminists such as those in SPEW deplored the practice, nevertheless they saw it as a necessary temporary sacrifice if it meant that more businessmen adopted the ‘economic doctrine’ of employing women
- typewriting was particularly attractive as an occupation for women, not least because it had not already acquired a ‘men’s work’ label

However, the patriarchal base of the Victorian domestic sphere was transferred into the public domain of the workplace. Women occupied subordinate rôles in both private and public spheres, and unless they were in charge of other *women* at work, had no opportunity to achieve managerial positions in the latter. By the time my informants were at work, many of these practices were still operating. The evidence, as supplied by those women, is summarised below.

7.2.2 Twentieth Century

- clerical workers, by the 1930s, were drawn from broader sections of the population than in Victorian times. The almost-exclusively middle-class orientation of the first office workers was now more broadly representative, with the balance tilted towards upper working-class applicants. The workforce had become more ‘proletarianized’
- the acquisition of pre-entry qualifications (eg shorthand-typing certificates) was more widespread, but it was still possible to get clerical employment straight from school. Evening classes offered further opportunities to acquire training and skill certificates
- during the inter-war years, clerical work was still not providing any real opportunities for advancement to top management or expectations of high earnings, offering few promotional prospects beyond that of supervisor
- by now the wide-ranging responsibilities of the nineteenth-century clerk had been subdivided into a range of specialisms: clerical work available was now more fragmented, ie many routine tasks had been divided into separate categories, and could be executed by workers after minimal skills training. However, it was not uncommon for the more prestigious secretarial jobs still to be held by the daughters of men from the professional classes.²²⁰
- secretarial work was very attractive to women during this era, in spite of the lack of promotional prospects, as it provided opportunities to use their ‘nurturing, caring’ attributes as well as carrying more prestige than clerking. ‘Looking after’ a boss gave rise to the ‘office wife’ label (and, like the wives of powerful men, the secretary’s prestige could be enhanced through reflected glory)
- wage rates for women continued to be less than men’s; and in many establishments such as the Civil Service or banks women had to forfeit rights to ‘establishment’ (ie a pensionable post) when they married
- during this era, women viewed their ‘rightful place’ as in the home: they willingly accepted the prevailing culture that marriage, and child-rearing, were women’s primary functions, with work seen as a temporary - if economically necessary – phase, usually abandoned on marriage, or at least when the first child was expected. The demographic imbalances of the mid-nineteenth century (the ‘woman problem’) had disappeared, and the majority of women

accepted marriage as their destiny, embracing the ideology that home-making would constitute their 'real' career

- the attitude that men were still the main breadwinners was underlined by the economic shortages of work during Britain's depression years. Women were expected to return to the domestic sphere and relinquish their jobs to those men returning from war service
- those of my informants who needed, or wished, to return to work after child-rearing did have opportunities to engage in part-time employment, although such work was unlikely to enable a woman to utilise all her skills and abilities or previous experience. Some of my informants engaged in a range of unskilled work after child-rearing
- by the middle of the century, office employment had become sex-stereotyped and largely deskilled. There had been a movement away from a pattern of horizontal segregation in the workplace (where different types of work are allocated to men and to women) and a shift to vertical segregation, where women are disproportionately represented in the lower grades
- by this point in time, the male workforce was indicating a reluctance to engage in what had come to be labelled 'women's work', for example shorthand-typewriting or telephony, thereby allowing women to dominate routine clerical work
- with few exceptions, my informants showed little desire to acquire post-entry qualifications (after gaining their book-keeping, shorthand or typewriting certificates). Such qualifications might have added to the 'human capital' identified by Crompton and Jones (1984) as a factor in promotional prospects; similarly, the women were less geographically mobile than were male employees, being 'tied' to their parents' homes, or later to their husbands' places of work

The range of economic, social and political events which occurred in the first half of the twentieth century had an enormous impact on British family life, translating into the experiences which my informants described in relation to childhood and their early adulthood. In many respects, the prevailing culture in which these young women grew up was more akin to that of the *early* nineteenth century than to the era covered by SPEW's activities. Women's primary rôles once more reverted to the domestic sphere, even though the ways in which society 'allowed' women to earn money had broadened and there were financial pressures on them to contribute to the family income. My informants also expressed views more in common with what feminists refer to as the 'slave' identity (referred to in Chapter 2, 2.1) than feminist sympathies: that is, they seemed content to accept the 'mastery' of the men in their lives and were less interested in exercising autonomy or independence themselves. Table 7.1 is a summary of many aspects of women's working lives during the hundred years covered by this study.

TABLE 7.1
A Summary of Continuities and Discontinuities Related to Women's Office Employment 1850-1950

Aspects which were detectable in both centuries	Changes which had occurred by the 20 th century's inter-war years
<p>1. Patriarchy dominant. By 20th century some evidence of daughters 'negotiating' their futures with parents, but most children conformed to the latter's wishes</p> <p>2. Very few women holding positions of responsibility or authority in the public sphere or within employment</p> <p>3. Job appointments likely to be made through family connections (patronage) or personal recommendation, rather than open competition</p> <p>4. Social conventions well understood by all social classes; 'ladylike behaviour' and 'respectability' especially for middle-class women an overriding cultural imperative</p> <p>5. Universal acceptance that women's main role was primarily 'in the home' in both centuries</p> <p>6. Social class divisions a recognised, and accepted, aspect of life in society</p> <p>7. Certain types of employment (eg office work) considered more 'suitable' than others for women (particularly in the case of those from middle- or upper working-class backgrounds) The restricted choice of employment meant that in spite of some opportunities to enter professions such as accountancy, women's main areas of employment even in the first half of the 20th century were in teaching, nursing or clerical occupations</p> <p>8. No equal pay for women even if doing the same jobs as men</p> <p>9. As the 20th century advanced there was some relaxation of the 19th-century strict segregation of the sexes in the workplace although fraternisation continued to be discouraged at work – even when travelling to and from the workplace</p>	<p>1. Demographic changes meant that women were no longer 'superfluous' in terms of the male:female ratio. Most women 'expected' that they would marry</p> <p>2. Clerks and shorthand-typists no longer needed to demonstrate expertise in two or three European languages before being considered for appointment. The 'qualities' and 'accomplishments' demanded of 19th century girls were replaced by the need to furnish formal, certificated qualifications</p> <p>3. Legislative changes affecting the raising of the school-leaving age to 14 (and improvements to the curriculum) meant that girls received a 'better' education than that offered to their 19th century forebears</p> <p>4. Many able girls could not benefit from opportunities to extend their education, as families' financial needs meant that even having gained scholarships, they could not remain at school beyond the statutory leaving age</p> <p>5. A huge upsurge in the demand for clerical workers offered more women the opportunity to select from a range of office employments; but the resulting division of labour produced a 'deskilling' effect. This meant that women had fewer prospects of achieving significant career advancement</p> <p>6. Clerical work became more 'proletarianized' (ie it lost some of its 'middle-class' exclusivity). There were fewer entrepreneurial opportunities than in the 19th century for individual women (because the expansion in the number of larger commercial bureaux, shorthand-typing/secretarial colleges, formal apprenticeships or training increased the competition)</p> <p>7. The division of labour also resulted in a separation of a 'business' from a 'secretarial' route (eg accountancy training would not include shorthand-typing)</p> <p>8. Statutory reductions in the length of the working week meant that 20th century workers worked shorter hours than the majority of Victorian clerical workers</p>

7.3 A Study Within a Corpus of Work

My findings relating to twentieth-century clerical workers confirm those of a number of previous researchers, such as Benét (1972), McNally (1979), Davies (1982), Crompton and Jones (1984) and Crompton and Sanderson (1990). In this sense, my work is neither new nor provides fresh theoretical frameworks; its overlap with previous work puts it into a worthy tradition. It is valuable in the sense that it provides a temporal link between the 'uncharted ground' of nineteenth-century female clerical work, and the well-established female-dominated British office world reported by those authors. There is also a dearth of empirical evidence regarding the ways in which women entered office work during the 1920s and 1930s although some studies make some reference to the national employment situation at that period (for example I have referred to the work of Sanderson (1986), of Roberts (1988) and to Courtney's (1926) autobiographical account of her working life).

Crompton and Jones surveyed women employed in a range of offices, although their enquiries concentrated on a period later than that covered by my thesis (the early 1980s), and were more concerned with analysing the social class position of female office workers than I. They reported similar phenomena to that in my data amongst their respondents: for example, they found that women were over-represented in the lower grades of many organisations and in general were employed in posts which did not capitalise on their potential. In other words, employers were getting greater value for money by demanding higher 'entry level' qualifications than were actually required by the work to be carried out. They also noted that in spite of the process of deskilling having gathered momentum, the Registrar-General's classification of white-collar work as 'middle-class' (ie skilled non-manual category III N) had not been affected as a result (Crompton and Jones 1984:74 *ff.*).

My own informants, like those of Crompton and Jones from later decades, had not 'systematically pursued bureaucratic careers', and their jobs also manifested 'restricted mobility and limited promotional ladders' (*ibid.*:134). However, I did not find that my informants saw their working environments as the 'female ghettos' which these authors reported, mirroring the previous studies of Benét (1972) and McNally (1979). It is therefore important to emphasise that it was only well after the end of the Second World War, perhaps related to the even greater demand for clerical workers which occurred after 1950 (not covered by this thesis) that office work seemed to make the transition from the 'fun' which my informants reported, to the more impersonal places of work which the previously-mentioned authors implied.

Benét's somewhat cynical survey of secretaries' lives (to which I referred in Chapter 6, 6.8) noted that men had lost interest in clerical work by the time she was writing. This had not entirely taken place by the 1930s. My informants worked in offices which were, on the whole, run by men (some of whom could write shorthand). Even during the Second World War, office bosses were invariably male, albeit those too old for

active service. Benét suggested that women's earlier (ie late nineteenth-century) introduction to the office was 'the final blow' to men's self-esteem because although the women's 'typing and telephoning' didn't initially interfere with 'his book-keeping and correspondence, ... before long there was very little in the clerk's job that could not be done by a woman' (Benét 1972:42). The female cashier-clerk posts occupied by some of my informants (Miss CC, Mrs HH, Mrs LL and Mrs UU) were, by the time these authors were reporting, well established in organisations such as building societies and banks (Crompton and Sanderson 1990:161), although management levels were, and remained, almost exclusively filled by men.

McNally's (1979) assessment that male chauvinism was manifest in twentieth-century offices was not an issue which occurred to my informants in relation to office life prior to the 1950s. She noted a world where 'women are largely *tolerated*, on the grounds that men can no more be expected to use a typewriter or answer the telephone than to wash socks or clean house' (McNally 1979:41, quoting Korda 1974:20²²¹). My informants indicated a willingness to perform such tasks. They *expected* to take over the 'nurturing' of their bosses in the same way that they took for granted 'looking after' their husbands (and children): and as I have illustrated, advice books for aspiring office workers encouraged this (Leafe 1964).

I have noted that the composition of the clerical workforce had widened to take in young women from all walks of life, and representing different age-groups on entry. The 1902 Education Act had made some form of secondary education compulsory for all children, and subsequent increases in the availability of scholarships to grammar schools meant that children from poorer homes could, in theory, extend their education beyond the age of fourteen. However, as many of my informants reported, the financial pressures on their parents often overrode the girls' opportunities to benefit from an extended education, which meant that not only working-class families, but also reduced-circumstance middle-class families required their daughters to leave school 'early'. Consequently, since it is fathers' occupations which determine the Registrar-General's social class categories, it is possible that some reported 'working-class' entrants to clerical work were in fact from the 'sunken middle class', which could throw doubt on the statistics contributing to an assessment that the clerical workforce had become 'proletarianized'. Davies's (1982) findings, although mainly based on the American scene, also claimed, as had Crompton and Jones (1984), that the proletarianization process was responsible for transforming 'autonomous male clerks into female office operatives and *members of the working class*' [my italics] (Davies 1982:5).²²²

There were aspects of women's quest for autonomy, empowerment and independence with which the members of SPEW did not concern themselves, sometimes because an issue was considered secondary to their main purpose of opening up new employment areas, and sometimes because an ideological argument did not sit well with their motivation. One such example concerns 'combination', or to use modern terminology, the unionisation of the workforce. Minutes of meetings record that Committee members refused to support such campaigns, mainly as some members were ideologically or politically opposed to

the idea of workers combining to resist their employers' practices (the Hon. Mrs Locke King is on record on this topic – see Chapter 4, 4.6).²²³ A second issue was the subject of women's enfranchisement: it is rare to see any mention of the suffrage in the Minutes, although I have charted the forefront activities of many members of the Committee in this matter from other evidence (for example Bodichon, Boucherett, Taylor).

On the evidence of the archive I can confirm that the extent to which the Society's earliest agenda has been taken through fulfils their stated aims and objectives; and my knowledge of SPTW's present-day activities demonstrates that this work continues in the same tradition, albeit with a very different pool of 'grantees'. The need to provide additional financial assistance for women who wish to improve their professional qualifications and therefore their occupational chances has not diminished over the centuries, although the initial objective of the Society – to create 'new' employments for women – is now irrelevant. It is unlikely that the present Committee would be asked to provide funding for the type of work which dominated the Society's first fifty years or so: today's young women are pursuing post-graduate professional qualifications, or perhaps artistic or musical careers.

As already stated, the concepts which I had identified for study when I drew up my research proposal (autonomy, empowerment and independence) now seem less than helpful when I review the two eras. The Victorians, I now believe, had greater incentives and opportunities to achieve autonomy and independence through work than did the later generation – a reversal of what I expected to find. Nineteenth-century women had few legal or financial rights, yet the evidence which emerged from SPEW's archives was of a generation which was prepared to strive for a greater degree of economic independence; they recognised their lack of autonomy (in relation to marriage and tax laws, the franchise and so on) and were prepared to take active steps to bring about change. However, it is difficult to infer such attitudes from my informants' circumstances. In what sense, for example, might a fourteen- or even sixteen-year-old girl be 'empowered'? How far might she impose her own wishes regarding her education or her work, on the pressing financial needs of a widowed mother, or unemployed father? What degree of independence is conferred by a wage of ten or fifteen shillings a week; by the need to return home from work to care for a disabled parent? There was also the cultural expectation that girls would not have the same freedom to inhabit the public sphere, even by the 1920s or '30s, as did their brothers, so that such social controls still, as in the nineteenth century, curtailed any chance of girls being able to exercise a degree of independence in their leisure time. The outcome was the 'biddable' generation represented here: 'You didn't argue, did you?' They found ways of coping, as one of my informants (Mrs NN) admitted, after being asked whether it was an unnecessary burden to attend evening classes many times a week, for three years. On the contrary, she replied, it was more like attending a youth club since that is where she met up with all her friends, and they had a lot of fun (see Chapter 6, 6.8).

7.4 Reflections

With regard to my research programme, I did experience some dissatisfactions, some of which have already been outlined in Chapter 2. My main concern is a failure to extract additional ‘life history’ data from my informants which I later wished to know about, for example more information regarding the women’s parents and siblings, their attitudes towards marriage, the extent to which their children’s needs had superseded their own, as well as more detail relating to their relationships with colleagues and employers. This failure was partly due to my inexperience with this form of enquiry and the limitations of the original questionnaires, and partly to time constraints: for example, by the time I had noticed the lack of such information, it was not possible to set up additional interviews with the women.

I cannot claim that my sample of informants is representative of the national situation, nor entirely of a local scene. There might have been other women from their generation who *had* broken through the ‘glass ceiling’, or for whom the pre-war educational system was an advantage, not a handicap. Neither have I been able to disaggregate social class from gender, although I have referred to the ways in which social class issues dominated women’s early access to clerical work. I did not acquire enough information from my small sample of informants to be able to make judgments about the effects of class on their life experiences, although their families’ economic circumstances did provide some clues.

In analysing where my intellectual journey has taken me, rather than where I originally planned to go, I recognise that I was swept along by the excitement of the historical aspects of the research (a discipline which was new to me, relating to a period which demanded of me a considerable amount of background reading). All this was to the detriment of the sociological ‘half’ of my research programme, which at the start I had felt was the more familiar and which I could therefore put aside until I had obtained the essential historical information. The physical journeys to the archive at Cambridge had an impact on the intellectual journey too: the number of hours (and the physical effects) of round trips of over two hundred miles, negotiating at least two of the most congested motorways in the country, took their toll on what could be achieved once I had arrived at the library. At first I did not always follow through a particular line of enquiry, allowing myself to be distracted by those interesting ‘side roads’ such as the Mrs Haweis affair (see Appendix 6), and had to invest time in revisiting some material at a later date (for example Boucherett’s involvement in the Freedom of Labour Defence, or Minutes from later years). My first few visits were less structured, as I reported in Chapter 2, although I soon learned to apply the necessary rigour to my evidence-gathering.

My admiration grew for the central historical character, Jessie Boucherett, as I learned more about SPEW’s history, but it is possible that I have been overly influenced by that admiration, and am concerned in case I have omitted to seek out aspects of her character which are less complimentary. Might her ‘leadership

qualities' be construed as 'dominance'? I would need to revisit the documentation with that particular possibility in mind.

At the start of the programme of study I expected to end with a thesis which gave approximately equal space to the two disciplines - historical and sociological. In the event, the quantity of background information relating to first-wave feminism, as well as the volume of material which I felt was needed to demonstrate SPEW's effectiveness, has resulted in a thesis which looks unbalanced and weighted towards the historical. Nevertheless, in the space available, I believe that I have been able to present my informants' stories in a way which provides further insights into their lives, and of their era.

7.5 Areas for Further Study

The lives of many of the 'characters' who emerge from the Minutes are worthy of further attention. I expect to make use of some of that information, for example in relation to Gertrude King (see Bridger 2003; and Jordan and Bridger 2003). Other personalities, such as the widow, Mrs Irwin, the subject of my Appendix 22, could contribute to a study of 'unremarked' women aspects of whose lives are depicted in the archives.

The SPEW/SPTW archive offers additional material worthy of the attention of social or industrial researchers, as there are further occupational areas whose beginnings are charted in the archives. For example, the Society spearheaded women as hairdressing apprentices – meeting considerable resistance. There are also many other examples of the initiatives which SPEW took, such as women's entry into pharmacy and other branches of the medical profession, into horticulture, in establishing commercial education or early links with institutions which developed into well-known schools or teacher training colleges.

I am also aware that the life-span of the generation represented by my informants is coming to an end, as many of those women are now in their 'nineties, and one is a centenarian. The very fact that they have lived such long lives could be worthy of further attention (see EN.17); but many more questions remain to be answered. For example, the 'sexual' aspects of inter-office relationships, and the whole range of 'hidden' rewards which keep women in particular jobs could be additional areas of investigation for sociologists, as McNally (1979) has suggested.

This thesis has encapsulated the living memories of a generation of female office workers regarding their early socialisation, which offer insights into an era pre-dating second-wave feminism, and which might serve to explain such women's lack of engagement with that ideology. It has also provided new information relating to the origins of women's entry into clerical employment, and has established the central importance of a previously under-reported but influential feminist, Jessie Boucherett, during the process.²²⁴

As a result of my researches, I believe that to some extent I can question the quotation which heads this chapter, and which is repeated here: 'Although previously unstudied ... records are released regularly, only rarely do newly available archives change historical assessment radically' (Jordanova 2000:23). Perhaps I have not been able to *change* much historical assessment regarding the period 1850-1950, but my research has contributed some new information to a well-researched period of feminist history.

¹ The name changed in 1926. See Chapter 4, 4.2, EN.105 for details

² Various categories of 'first-wave feminists' have been identified by Olive Banks (1986:74-83). The activities of the Langham Place Group offer examples of 'first-wave' feminism (see Chapter 3)

³ The statutory leaving age was 15 at that time, but grammar school pupils were expected to remain at school for the extra year at least, in order to sit for the GSC examination. A small number of girls left at the end of the fourth form, without sitting for GSC examinations

⁴ I was awarded a Silver Medal and a distinction by the Royal Society of Arts in their Stage III typewriting examination, and was also one of three girls being trained by the Pitman organisation as a potential British representative at the World Speed Typewriting Championships to be held in Milan. Each of us could type at speeds of over 120 words per minute – a skill which I have found extremely useful ever since (see comments in Chapter 2 relating to transcriptions of tape-recorded interviews)

⁵ Although I had hoped to continue the M.Phil. research and thus fulfil the requirements for a doctorate, by then working as a deputy headteacher in a large comprehensive school I could not allocate the required time and energy to a further two years of study

⁶ Both School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate were 'group certificates' (ie pupils had to pass in a group of subjects: a minimum of 5 at the SC level or 3 at HSC plus one subsidiary (2 plus 2 after 1928), which were aimed at ensuring a broad and balanced curriculum. These qualifications had been available since 1917, and could be taken by children who remained at school beyond the statutory leaving age which was 14 until 1947, when the 1944 'Butler' Education Act was implemented. Although grammar schools charged fees, there were many scholarship pupils even prior to the 1944 Act (see Chapter 6); but after that Act came into force, all secondary education was free. From 1944 the '11+' was taken by virtually all British schoolchildren to ascertain the type of secondary education for which each child was suited (many, at that time, were younger than 11). I was in the first batch of those children; my cohort also constituted the last to sit the group certificate, the GSC in 1950. Those examinations were replaced by the General Certificate of Education (GCE) Ordinary Level single-subject examination from 1949 (examined for the first time in 1951) and the GCE Advanced Level from 1951

⁷ During the years 1929-1933 there was an international economic depression. Britain suffered a General Strike in 1926; the unemployment rate never fell below 10 per cent in the 1930s, with a peak rate of 22.5 per cent in 1932. In contrast, the unemployment rate in 1955, the year I married, was one per cent

⁸ This was written by Dr Ellen Jordan, whose involvement with me is explained in Chapter 2 (and see Jordan 1998)

⁹ Dr Hirsch is a feminist historian whose publications include a major biography of Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon

¹⁰ An example is that of Mrs Constance Hoster, the proprietress of a 'training office' for typists whose activities were closely linked with the Society (see Chapters 4 and 5)

¹¹ For example Jessie Boucherett's obituary for Caroline Ashurst Biggs in *The Englishwoman's Review* (Boucherett 1889:387-89)

¹² Miss King was appointed in September 1865, remaining in that post for the next fifty years, after which she served the Committee as 'special adviser' until her death in 1929. An example of her handwriting can be seen in the Minute included as Appendix 4

¹³ 'Memorial funds' are explained in Appendix 5

¹⁴ See Appendix 6 for further information, and Howe (1967) for a biography of Mrs Haweis

¹⁵ 'Feminism' was originally a French term which emerged late in the nineteenth century

¹⁶ Whilst the efforts of nineteenth-century activists initially centred on the needs of *middle*-class women (as did SPEW), their activities were soon extended to encompass women from broader sections of the population (see Purvis 1989, for example)

¹⁷ Perhaps a future research question might focus on the hypothesis that women who have had an interesting career live longer than women who have not? (My thanks to Dr Hirsch for this thought)

¹⁸ This epistemology views the social world from the standpoint of the individuals who are part of the activity being investigated, and 'is characterized by a concern for the individual' (Cohen *et al.* 2000:22). 'Knowledge' is viewed as a construction of reality where participants might recognise themselves

¹⁹ The 'voices' of the Victorians have, of course, been heard through documentary, not oral, evidence

²⁰ Triangulation refers to a plurality of methods which allows the cross-checking of data validity, eg interviews, census data and documents. The term can also be applied to ‘sources, investigators and theories’. (Cohen et al. 2000:108)

²¹ Appendix 7 contains copies of the relevant correspondence and list of questions

²² KOGA is the acronym for the old girls’ association, and I use it throughout the study to distinguish that sample from other informants

²³ See Appendices 8, 8a and 8b for the KOGA correspondence and questionnaire

²⁴ This was the mother of a friend, and the latter had been present during that shorter interview. The informant lives in Yorkshire and on her return home, completed the tape recording for me

²⁵ This woman’s health precluded a face-to-face interview but she offered to continue our exchanges through additional written correspondence

²⁶ I originally hoped to include informants where two or three generations from the same family had followed clerical occupations, and although I did identify one mother-daughter pair and interviewed both women, only the mother was subsequently included in this study when I decided to exclude the youngest cohort

²⁷ ‘Feminism’ describes the body of ideas which aim to enhance women’s status and power; and ‘feminist theory is locally situated, grounded in a woman’s experiences’ (Richardson 1991:173).

²⁸ As part of my preparations for the research proposal, I had read a copy of one of the only two previously-published articles relating directly to the SPEW archive, so prior to my arrival at Girton I had a general sense of the archive’s content (Tusan 2000:221-29).

²⁹ Dr Jordan and I met for the first time at Girton in June 2001, and our mutual interest in SPEW’s achievements has led to a collaborative friendship (Jordan and Bridger 2003 *in preparation*). I am most grateful to her for generously sharing her transcriptions of those Minutes, which have contributed greatly to my evidence base

³⁰ All quotations reproduced in this study, whether via Ellen Jordan’s diskettes or my personal transcriptions, were verified (and some necessary corrections made) during my last few visits to the archive

³¹ The use of a computer in creating such files was invaluable, since the ‘find’ facility could be used to follow a topic, or an individual, through many years of Minute-book entries

³² See EN.20 for a definition of triangulation. In postmodernist mixed-genre texts, ‘we do not triangulate; we *crystallize*. We recognize that there are far more than “three sides” from which to approach the world.’ (Richardson 2000:934)

³³ See Appendix 10 for a copy of the letter. A magazine I did not think to try was *Woman’s Realm*: another researcher had had some success from a letter to that journal, when recruiting her respondent female Civil Servants (Sanderson 1988:39)

³⁴ My letter to the *Reading Chronicle* editor is reproduced in Appendix 11, with the subsequent printed version attached to it. At that stage I still expected to include representatives from three eras (Victorian, 1920s and 1950s) in the study

³⁵ Replies came intermittently, the final one not until January 2002

³⁶ For example, one lives in Vancouver; one in the West Midlands; one in Perthshire and a further six in other English counties which would have created problems for me in terms of time and travel

³⁷ A typical response rate to a mailed questionnaire is 40 per cent, although ‘with the judicious use of reminders, a 70 per cent to 80 per cent response level should be possible’ (Cohen *et al.* 2000:263)

³⁸ I had told the Committee of my interest in the history of some secretarial colleges whose origins are detailed in SPEW’s archives. The Committee member knew of two women who had trained at one such college

³⁹ This was for purposes of economy, as some interviews filled more than three one-hour cassettes

⁴⁰ For example relating to an unpopular time-and-motion study exercise which Huntley and Palmers had carried out in the 1920s (see Corley 1972)

⁴¹ Mainly because the time involved in learning to use the packages was not justified by the small sample

⁴² This concerned the setting up of the Mrs Hawcis Memorial Fund. A brief outline of that situation is offered in Appendix 6

⁴³ I am most appreciative of the unfailing courtesy and cooperation of Kate Perry, the archivist at Girton College, who provided additional reference material (not all from the SPEW archive) at those times when my anxiety to pursue a particular lead overcame my reluctance to impose on her goodwill

⁴⁴ With one exception, those who replied by post used manuscript, not typescript

⁴⁵ Note that Glucksmann originally published under the pseudonym of Cavendish, as she had worked alongside the women in her first study, and did not wish to be identified by them. (Cavendish 1982)

⁴⁶ Prior to moving to Willingham Hall in Lincolnshire in 1790, the Boucheret (*original spelling*) family seat was the Manor House at Stallingborough, the home of the Askew (Ayscough) family, whose daughter Isabella married Matthew Boucheret of North Willingham in 1709. An earlier Askew (Anne) had been burnt at the stake in Smithfield Market in 1546 for heresy. [Source of this information courtesy of a retired headteacher of Stallingborough CE Primary School.] The published source referring to Boucherett's lineal descendancy from the Askews is Blackburn (1902:50). Helen Blackburn (1842-1903) was a friend of Boucherett, with whom she co-authored *The Condition of Working Women and the Factory Acts* (1896)

⁴⁷ The sisters were also admired in their locality for their fine horsemanship (a normal part of 'county' family life). For the rest of her life, Boucherett was well known for exploring most of England and Wales by 'driving out with her maid in a little pony carriage' (letter from Harriet McIlquham to Mrs Wolstenholme Elmy in 1905, after Boucherett's death). Fortunately, Jessie did not suffer the same fate as her grandfather, who had been killed in 1815 when his curricule overturned at the foot of Willingham Hill (Leach and Pacey 1992:15)

⁴⁸ My thanks to Dr Ellen Jordan for a copy of the Louisa Boucherett-Florence Nightingale correspondence

⁴⁹ The school survives today, albeit in recently-constructed buildings, as the Stallingborough Church of England Primary School. Sadly, none of its nineteenth-century log books have been retained by the school

⁵⁰ Sophia Jex Blake also figured briefly in SPEW's history, as a teacher of their book-keeping classes from February 1860 (see Chapter 4, 4.3)

⁵¹ See 3.5.1

⁵² Norman McMillan (ed) 2000

⁵³ This same information is repeated in the entry for Boucherett in the *Dictionary of National Biography*

⁵⁴ Phrase used in 'Historically Significant', the webpage of *Leicester Who's Who*

⁵⁵ 'Welfare liberalism' was not a term in use during the 19th century, but in the 20th century the phrase implied a variation of the type of social liberalism which John Stuart Mill advocated, and which women from a philanthropic tradition interpreted in a variety of practical ways such as for the protection of working women. Boucherett might also be labelled as a 'welfare economist', another phrase which did not emerge until the 20th century, relating to a branch of economics seeking to evaluate economic policies in terms of their effects on the well-being of the community (*Encyclopædia Britannica* 1997:569)

⁵⁶ That is not to imply that conservatism and feminism were – or are – incompatible. The early liberal feminists, of whom Boucherett was one, represented all shades of political and religious opinion, as well as different social classes

⁵⁷ See 3.5.4 and Appendix 13a, which gives further information regarding this association

⁵⁸ Hicks says Boucherett painted 'a pathetic picture' of Jane Byerley's latter years (Hicks c.1950:128). Boucherett herself wrote: 'The lady at whose school I was educated retired from business late in life, with a good fortune, acquired by her own exertions, intending to pass the evening of her days in rest and comfort. Unfortunately she was induced to lend her whole fortune to a promising nephew, to set him in trade. He lost it all, and she was reduced to such distress that she had to appeal to the charity of her ... pupils. She ended by obtaining a situation as companion, and is now dead. The fate of this poor lady ought to serve as a warning to all other women who had laid by money' (Boucherett 1863:69)

⁵⁹ Many writers have indicated the shortcomings of nineteenth-century girls' boarding schools: Borer (1975:235) drew attention to the Brontë sisters' experiences at Roe Head, and Jane Austen at Reading's Abbey School (*ibid.*:193). See also Dyhouse 1981 for a comprehensive coverage of the provision of education for nineteenth-century girls

⁶⁰ Thomas Beddoes (1760-1808) with his assistant Humphrey Davy, developed a 'pneumatic institute' for the cure of respiratory diseases at Clifton, Bristol. He wrote on political, social and medical subjects. His son was the poet and physiologist Thomas Lovell Beddoes. (Chambers 2002)

⁶¹ The Reverend Dr Price, and Hannah Burgh, the widow of his friend James, were mentors to the early feminist, Mary Wollstonecraft (1759-97) when she became part of their circle in Newington Green in 1784. Her philosophy evolved as a result of her readings of Burgh's writings: his views on female education were a major inspiration for her. Wollstonecraft's feminism, in turn, exerted a powerful influence on Barbara

Leigh Smith Bodichon's developing ideas prior to her emergence as the leader of the Langham Place Group (Hirsch 1996:44 in Campbell Orr 1996)

⁶² Bessie Rayner Parkes's great-grandfather was Dr Joseph Priestley

⁶³ For a definitive biography of Barbara Bodichon, see Hirsch (1998). Bodichon was the illegitimate daughter of a Radical MP, the Unitarian Ben Smith (1783-1860). She made her living as a very talented water-colour artist, and achieved lasting recognition for the success of many of her feminist campaigns and, in collaboration with Emily Davies, the founding of Girton College, Cambridge

⁶⁴ See EN.76 for further information regarding George Hastings

⁶⁵ See Section 3.5.4

⁶⁶ Bodichon contributed £200 to the setting up of the law copying office, which was located in Portugal Street and Maria Rye was appointed to run it. Rye reported that she was quickly overwhelmed with applicants: on one occasion 810 women applied for a single vacancy (Hirsch 1998:194)

⁶⁷ The NAPSS had been launched in 1857 as 'an open forum for progressive middle-class ideas' and was instrumental in breaching the barriers against speaking on a public platform which middle-class women faced. Its founder, Lord Brougham, was an old friend of Bodichon's father, Benjamin Smith. Bessie Parkes later credited Bodichon with women's presence at its Congresses: 'it was mainly owing to previous efforts and influence of hers that women were freely admitted to all its advantages' (quoted in Hirsch 1998:193)

⁶⁸ George Sand was the pseudonym of the French woman writer Amandine Aurore Lucie Dupin, Baronne Dudevant (1804-1876)

⁶⁹ This was a printing office employing only women, set up with the backing of George Hastings, with Faithfull in charge (see EN.76)

⁷⁰ Procter was an acclaimed poet, whose popular works were published in the UK, the USA and translated into German. The 1880 reprint of her *Legends and Lyrics* included an Introduction by Charles Dickens – a family friend – who wrote appreciatively of her literary talents. In what amounted to an obituary, he admitted that he had been publishing her poems in *Household Words* for over a year before he knew her real identity, as she had used the pseudonym Miss Mary Berwick (Procter 1880 reprint). A convert to Roman Catholicism in 1851, Procter's most famous poem was 'A Lost Chord', later set to music by Sir Arthur Sullivan. Sadly, she succumbed to tuberculosis at the early age of 39. Her father, Bryan Waller Procter (1787-1874), was the poet whose pen-name was Barry Cornwall

⁷¹ The 1851 census had established that there were about three million more women than men in the over-15 age group, of whom about half were responsible for their own livelihood. Coupled with the 'problem' facing countless middle-class women, ie the dearth of occupations of which the culture of 'respectability' approved, the plight of widows or other women who had no male relative to support them was an issue which simply must be addressed. As *marriage* and *child-bearing* were women's *raison d'être*, if there weren't enough men to need them, they were 'superfluous'. 'Redundant' was the word used by W. R. Greg to describe such women in a well-publicised series of articles on 'Why are Women Redundant?' (1862); but the subject had already been receiving considerable attention after the census figures had drawn attention to the imbalance. Jessie Boucherett later wrote a response to Greg's views ('How to Provide for Superfluous Women' in Butler 1869:32) in addition to a number of other articles on the same subject

⁷² Martineau 'maintained the fiction that the author [of this article] was a man' (Jordan 1999a:228, Note 2)

⁷³ The General Committee, whose first recorded meeting was held on 11 January 1860 after the affiliation with NAPSS had been arranged, then set up a Managing Committee whose officers were W S Cookson, G W Hastings, Horace Mann, John Pares, Isa Craig, Matilda Hays, Adelaide Procter and Lady Elizabeth Cust. Craig and Hays were given the task of finding premises suitable for housing the classes which the Society was to launch, and on 7 February they reported that they had engaged a school room in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury at a rent of 15s. a month (*GCM* 7.2.1860 *GCIP* SPTW 1/1) (See Appendix 15 for full Committee)

⁷⁴ Anthony Ashley Cooper, 7th Earl of Shaftesbury, 'piloted successive factory acts through the House of Commons, achieving the 10-hour day and the provision of lodging-houses for the poor. ... [prohibiting] underground employment of women and of children under 13. ... Strongly evangelical, he opposed radicalism although he worked with the trade unions for factory reforms' (Chambers 2002:1376)

⁷⁵ Report read at a meeting of SPEW subscribers, 17 February 1860. See Appendix 14

⁷⁶ George Hastings, NAPSS General Secretary, and later an MP, was elected to SPEW's Managing Committee in January 1860. He was also a shareholder of the *EWJ*, and had 'formed a plan' for a women's

printing office. He was a joint financier of the female printing press when it was launched under Emily Faithfull's management in March 1860 (the Victoria Press). In later years, however, Hastings was convicted of embezzling £20,000 of a client's money, for which he was gaoled for five years, and therefore expelled from the House of Commons on 2 March 1892

⁷⁷ Appendix 16 lists the first rules following affiliation to the NAPSS. Further changes were made in 1867 (Appendix 16a) removing the earlier requirement of '*twelve ... ladies and twelve ... gentlemen, nominated by the council of the National Association*' (GCM 17.2.1860). Rule V as amended to: '... consisting ... of other ladies and gentlemen, such Committee having power to add to its number' (AR 1867:4)

⁷⁸ She was, for example, the only member of the Committee to request that copies of all Minutes '*should be forwarded to her after each meeting*' (GCM 7.2.1860); and there are many instances of Boucherett contributing additional cash when the Society's funds were too low

⁷⁹ Lord Brougham, Lord John Russell and Lord Shaftesbury were the most notable philanthropists and political reformers associated with NAPSS. Brougham had also co-founded the influential *Edinburgh Review* in 1802

⁸⁰ For example, many of the LPG women had been platform speakers, or had had their papers read by others, at NAPSS Congresses prior to SPEW's launch

⁸¹ Mr Edgar had been appointed SPEW's Auditor on 3 July 1860

⁸² See Appendix 18:ii for the letter to Miss Crowe (GCIP SPTW 4/1)

⁸³ Emily Faithfull's name figured prominently in a notorious divorce case. It may well have been this situation which triggered an announcement from SPEW that whilst Faithfull had been associated with the Committee in its earliest days, by 1864 neither she nor the Victoria Press, which she ran, was involved with the Society (AR 1864:10).

⁸⁴ Jameson, whom Bodichon and Parkes viewed fondly as 'an adopted aunt' was an important rôle model for Bodichon: indeed, 'the *Journal* was committed to Jameson's theme of the *Communion of Labour*, the unity of male and female principles in the social order' (Rendall 1987:127)

⁸⁵ Evans (now Marian Lewes *aka* George Eliot) wrote to the publisher John Chapman in 1856 commenting that an article which Hays had written on George Sand was of poor quality: '[T]he *whole* of the introduction, and every passage where Miss H. launches into more than a connecting sentence or two is feminine rant of the worst kind, which it will be simply *fatal* to the [Westminster] *Review* to admit' (quoted in Hirsch 1998:188)

⁸⁶ It should be remembered that in this era, young women did develop close friendships with others of their sex, but these relationships were not generally of a sexual nature. Adelaide Procter was particularly attached to Hays, but there is no evidence to suggest that this was anything other than a platonic regard. Nevertheless, Hays was an acknowledged lesbian, which may have been an awkward thing for some of the Langham Place feminists to negotiate (this comment courtesy of Dr. Hirsch March 2003)

⁸⁷ For example in order to have two of her Girton students accepted into the Chartered Accountants' Institute, a campaign in which SPEW had been engaged for many years previously (see Chapter 4, 4.3 and Chapter 5, 5.5.1)

⁸⁸ Although Bodichon was the 'beloved' daughter of a 'rich, handsome and popular father' (see EN.63), and in adulthood was independently wealthy as well as being a well-respected artist and leading feminist, nevertheless she was sensitive regarding the effects which her illegitimate status - 'not [being] entirely respectable' - had had on her childhood (Hirsch 1998:20)

⁸⁹ Taylor was the step-daughter of John Stuart Mill.

⁹⁰ Mackenzie was the Editor of the *EWB* at this time, as well as the Chairman of the FLD

⁹¹ It is worth emphasising that employment as a governess was not only a greatly over-stocked and under-paid category, but that there were few opportunities for middle-class women to *train* as teachers when the Society was founded. Governesses were employed on the basis of their 'gentlewoman' *bona fides* but were still an under-class: not treated as servants, but not accepted as 'equals' with the family either. Many were inadequately educated themselves; few were capable of teaching arithmetic, so families frequently employed a male tutor for that subject, with the governess covering 'accomplishments' rather than 'subjects'. The pupil-teacher system of later years offered a form of apprenticeship, but was usually of interest to girls from working-class or lower middle-class homes, and led to teaching only in the elementary schools provided for the working classes

⁹² See Banks 1986:73-105

⁹³ Banks lists Helen Blackburn, Lydia Becker and Josephine Butler alongside Boucherett as holding such views (Banks 1986:81). Boucherett was closely associated with each of these women in a range of campaigns, many of which are detailed in this study

⁹⁴ In modern terminology, we might say 'testimony' or 'petition' rather than 'memorial' but the latter term is used throughout the archive, as well as in historical literature, and here represents a statement of the views of SPEW

⁹⁵ See 5.5.6, and Mrs EE's comment, Chapter 6, 6.3

⁹⁶ 'The woman problem', or 'the woman question' engaged the attention of numerous writers and discussion groups at this time, not least the LPG. The issues at the centre of the 'problem' were 'prostitution, ... husband-hunting, ... genteel poverty, and ... the "busy idleness" of middle-class women' (Jordan 1999b:14). As there were 'three quarters of a million more women than men' according to the 1851 census (*EWJ* III, No.13 1859:34), and therefore 'two millions of our countrywomen are unmarried and have to maintain themselves' (Boucherett *EWJ* IV, No.24 1860:361), the 'woman problem' was acute

⁹⁷ Anna Jameson had earlier written that in France women were deemed to be capable of engaging in clerical work but it was more difficult for them to be thus employed in England (Jameson 1846:236-7). Martineau's philosophy, advocating a more rational education for girls, had also impressed Boucherett; she had found the former's *Edinburgh Review* article so inspirational that extracts were printed in SPEW's Annual Reports (see Chapter 3, 3.5.1)

⁹⁸ There were already, at that time, some offices where women were employed and where it was taken for granted that women would not receive the same rates of pay as their male colleagues eg local post offices, and some railway offices

⁹⁹ SPEW remained proud of being 'the only Society which keeps a free register for all women (except domestic servants) who depend upon their own exertions, which assists girls by apprenticeship or otherwise to acquire a competent knowledge of various kinds of business, and which makes it a first duty to widen the field of women's industry, and to ascertain by experiment what occupations are suitable to them' (*AR* 1878:6). Late in life, Boucherett ensured the continuance of this 'free' service by gifting £1000 in 1903 'on condition that no fees should ever be charged at the Office for the help given to applicants' (GCIP SPTW 1, Minutes 19.1.1967)

¹⁰⁰ Although this was unattributed, it is likely to have been written by the editor, Bessie Parkes

¹⁰¹ Perhaps this was the first indication that secretaries were expected to be 'young and attractive': an attitude so prevalent in mid-20th century

¹⁰² 'Teacher-training' in this instance must have referred to the pupil-teacher scheme for elementary school teaching. Under this scheme, bright working-class children could be prepared to take scholarship examinations for entry to training courses. They taught as assistants to the headteacher, with some instruction from him, and also attended pupil-teacher centres for further training. See Robinson 2003

¹⁰³ The 16-year-old minimum age limit had been part of the rules of the Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Fund, which was subsumed into SPEW's administration in 1899. It is quite likely that as the same people were managing this Fund as were serving on SPEW's other committees, in time the CABMF rule became indistinguishable from SPEW's earlier practices

¹⁰⁴ Bessie Parkes often addressed meetings in other cities, launching off-shoots of SPEW's London base such as in Dublin in 1861. Emily Faithfull shared the platform with her on that occasion (*EWJ* VIII, No.46 1861a:226-8)

¹⁰⁵ This was to satisfy the Income Tax authorities that the Society was a charitable institution. It was also necessary to rephrase the Memorandum and Articles of Association (*AR* 1926:6)

¹⁰⁶ The General Committee was originally made up of an even number of men and of women; in time, however, as vacancies arose, the balance shifted so that there were always more women than men on SPEW's committees. '*The election of a new President was discussed. The ladies present thought it most desirable to have a gentleman especially as the majority of the Committee were ladies. It would look too much as if the Society were entirely in the hands of women whereas a mixture of ladies & gentlemen was in their opinion best*' (*MCM* 23.10.1885)

¹⁰⁷ As mentioned, the first surviving Minutes indicate that Matilda Hays and Isa Craig, acting on behalf of the Committee, hired a school room in Queen's Square, Bloomsbury, where the book-keeping (and the law-copying) classes would be held

¹⁰⁸ Committee members present on these two occasions included Sir Francis Goldsmid, George Hastings, the Hon. Arthur Kinnaird and W. Strickland Cookson, in addition to Isa Craig, Bessie Parkes, and Adelaide Procter

¹⁰⁹ See the Newsom Report, *Half Our Future* (1963 London, HMSO for DES) for details of curricula in twentieth-century secondary modern and secondary technical schools

¹¹⁰ My thanks to Dr Ellen Jordan for this reference. Miss Orme was a member of SPEW's Committees for most of the 1870s, and as a friend of Barbara Bodichon was also one of the Langham Place Group

¹¹¹ Bodichon and the Langham Place circle were closely associated with the Working Women's College (my thanks to Dr Pam Hirsch for this reference). The mention of the College's activities in SPEW's annual report is an example of the way the Society promoted any ventures linked to their supporters or Committee members

¹¹² One of Boucherett's major campaigns was to encourage more endowed schools for girls, whose curricula would be organised on similar lines to those in boys' schools. She deplored the fact that there was 'nothing to raise the level of education. The only choice offered ... lies between ... playing on the pianoforte, working in worsteds and doing crochet, and [a] seminary ... where dancing, deportment, and flower painting are the order of the day' (Boucherett *EWJ* IV, No.24 1860:366; and see Boucherett *EWJ* IX, No.49 1862:20-28)

¹¹³ It is possible that she continued beyond 1926: I have been unable to ascertain the date of her death. It is noteworthy that by 1979 there were 711 women members of the Institute of Chartered Accountants, and 3,378 by 1981 (Crompton and Jones 1984:165)

¹¹⁴ I am indebted to Dr. Jordan for this quotation, who provided it via a private communication

¹¹⁵ 'Open competitive examination on behalf of the Civil Service Commissioners was instituted for all office appointments, except those definitely excepted in a gazetted list. ... Clerical posts were still divided between only two examinations, of which the stiffer was for the group called successively Scheme I, Higher Division, Class I and Administrative Class, and the less advanced for that called Scheme II, Lower or Second Division. ... Only twenty recruits had been admitted by the Class I examination, 1870 vintage, when another Chancellor of the Exchequer ... set up a committee in 1874 ... to consider recruitment and grading afresh. This committee introduced a new grade at the bottom – boy clerks, who were to obtain promotion by examination or be discharged at nineteen'. (Craig 1955:188-9)

¹¹⁶ Miss King's own salary, for most of her 50-year-long service to SPEW, was £100 per annum. This may seem generous in the light of average salaries between 1865 and 1915, but on the evidence of her contributions to the *effectiveness* of the Society, it is my opinion that they received more than value for their money (see Bridger *Gertrude Jane King: More Than 'Just a Secretary'* unpublished paper, 2003)

¹¹⁷ See Appendix 20 for details of the amounts which Boucherett contributed

¹¹⁸ See Appendix 24, Rule 6

¹¹⁹ see Chapter 5, 5.5.10 and 5.5.11 for further information

¹²⁰ This was in spite of her stated intention to repay the whole £60 in weekly instalments of £1 commencing in January 1888 (*MCM* 17.12.1886)

¹²¹ Boucherett's family traditions apparently set a pattern for her. The Willingham Hall ladies are recorded as providing 'a sumptuous treat' for the Stallingborough School (Chapter 3, 3.1); she also held a tea party at the end of term for the Middle Class children at Christmas in 1871, holding a separate one for the evening class pupils (*MCM* 22.11.1871)

¹²² See 4.6 for information regarding the Girls' Friendly Society, which was founded in 1875 for the purpose of providing some measure of 'guardianship' over the well-being of such young girls

¹²³ The 'trouser ban' which was such a part of my own employment was not confined to office staff. Earlier in my teaching career, it was *de rigueur* for those of us teaching in the secretarial department of the technical college to dress 'smartly', in line with the 'uniform' of office staff. We could not wear trousers to work, even though female colleagues in other faculties did so. Years later, the secondary school where I was teaching made headlines in the national papers when one member of staff chose to challenge the headmaster's ruling against women staff wearing trousers: her resultant exclusion meant that her union called the staff out on strike. Although the head was overruled, for many years afterwards very few women staff 'dared' to wear trousers to school

¹²⁴ As will be seen in Chapter 6, 'docility' was still very apparent amongst my twentieth-century informants

¹²⁵ See Appendix 22 for more details (the relevant entries from the Minutes)

¹²⁶ Miss Long took over when Mrs Müller, née Crosby, gave up the business on her marriage. Mrs Müller served on SPEW's Committees for many years after her marriage

¹²⁷ The course would be of three months' duration, or if shorthand and typewriting were added, of six months' duration. The secretarial course could be taken without the other, ie lasting three months

¹²⁸ The plan-tracing business, although it does not come strictly into the 'clerical' category, is depicted in more detail in Chapter 5 as not only was it another of SPEW's more successful sponsorships, but it offers an example of the ways in which 'networks' allowed women to embark on 'new' branches of work. Its history also illustrates the degree of support offered to the Society's protégées. There is considerable information about Miss Collingridge in the Minutes, but art courses are not covered by my study

¹²⁹ In addition to this Fund, she had earlier, in 1909, founded the Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund (EWWLTF), subsequently absorbed by SPEW in 1913. She was also a vice-president of the Typists' Section of the Incorporated Phonographic Society and of the Society of Women Journalists; and a member of the committees of the London and National Society for Women's Service, of the London International and French Chambers of Commerce, of the Journal Committee of the London Chamber of Commerce, and of the Court of Referees of the Ministry of Labour. (See Appendix 23)

¹³⁰ This situation may not have reached the ears of other SPEW personnel: there are no mentions of it in the Minutes. See Chapter 5, 5.5.11 and EN.172 for my source

¹³¹ The loan fund referred to here was the EWWLTF (see EN.129), 'raised by Mrs Hoster and a few friends for the purpose of helping educated girls' which amalgamated with SPEW in 1913, hence the correspondence being in their archive (*AR* 1914:8). Mrs Hoster was apparently behaving in a rather high-handed manner, and relations between her and the Central Bureau personnel were decidedly cool, on the evidence of this correspondence, as they had wished to claim the credit for setting up a similar loan fund (GCIP SPTW 4/1)

¹³² The law-copying business by this time shared premises with the Middle Class Women's Emigration Society which Maria Rye was running. Jane Lewin, who was not related to Sarah Lewin, SPEW's assistant secretary, had worked with Maria Rye in setting up that Society; and after the latter began to distance herself from the emigration scheme, being more involved with placing pauper children in overseas homes, Jane Lewin ran the office until her retirement in 1881, by which time she was aged 52

¹³³ It was due to Mrs Locke King's persistence – and her contacts with the Royal court – that the Queen eventually agreed to become SPEW's patron in 1869. Mrs Locke King had been pressing for this since 1864, the date when Victoria had become patron of SPEW's Dublin branch

¹³⁴ The proposed Guild was for '*gentlewomen engaged in some remunerative employment*', its object being '*to link together persons connected with the institutions and centres of industry which already exist for the benefit of ladies*' (*MCM* 24.11.1876). The only other information I have been able to obtain about Lady Feilding is that she founded a charitable home in London for elderly women, which still exists today

¹³⁵ Their schooling, of course, would have reinforced social class divisions too. Middle-class girls found that 'social snobbery ... formed part of the "hidden curriculum" There is no doubt that the girls were made fully aware both of their own privileged class position and also of the fact that their social status throughout life would depend on that of their fathers, brothers and future husbands' (Dyhouse 1981:55)

¹³⁶ At that time the GFS (a religious group dedicated to providing support and friendship for working girls) was trying to attract more 'business and professional women' to its organisation, and it was apparently necessary to brief Associates on the most effective ways of treating potential recruits from these circles since the 'society ... was originated for, and has always been connected with, girls of a lower rank than themselves' (*GFS AJA* August 1885:117)

¹³⁷ The term 'Member' was used to denote the working girls for whom the GFS was originally founded (frequently shopgirls). 'Associates' were the 'gentlewomen' who organised the Society

¹³⁸ Many of the young girls taking up apprenticeships and other training as a result of SPEW's assistance, and which are used as illustrations here, would have been born between 1845 and 1870. It is therefore possible that some of them would represent the grandmother or even the parent generation of those women interviewed for Part Three of this study

¹³⁹ The total amount lent to applicants during the year 2000 was £27,425

¹⁴⁰ Caroline Ashurst Biggs's father Joseph Biggs had audited SPEW's books (after Mr Edgar retired) from 1878 until March 1891. He was politically liberal, and was a strong supporter of the Italian political activist Mazzini

¹⁴¹ Parkes, who was the likely author of this article, did not see men and women working together. She disapproved of her brother's friends, who were clerks, as she thought they indulged in salacious, even disgusting, talk about young women. (My thanks to Dr. Pam Hirsch for this information)

¹⁴² 'The Angel in the House' is the title of a 14-canto series of poems, written by Coventry Patmore in 1854. The phrase came to epitomise the myth that women were *spiritually* superior to men, a viewpoint which placed a (middle-class) woman securely *in the home* – her sphere – where she was 'the refiner and the comforter of man' (Jordan 1999a:51, citing Jameson 1843:257). By the 1850s, this myth 'can be found embedded in almost all public representations of women and their position' (Jordan *ibid.*)

¹⁴³ For a dozen years, these two Civil Service departments had 'faced each other with levelled quills', nevertheless the merger removed the necessity for writing '30,000 letters a year, 100 each working day' (Craig 1955:128)

¹⁴⁴ Lady John Manners (Janetta) was the wife of the Postmaster General 1874-80 and 1885-6. She was the author of *Employment of Women in the Public Service* (1882) Edinburgh & London, William Blackwood

¹⁴⁵ Later known as the Westminster Bank Ltd.

¹⁴⁶ Zimmeck cites an 1892 medical officer's memorandum for the view that the marriage bar 'removed an incentive for women to 'take precautions and ... outrage nature' by practising birth control (Zimmeck 1986:162)

¹⁴⁷ Initially this examiner was the Rev. Proctor, but due to ill health he was succeeded in 1879 by his colleague, Thomas Green

¹⁴⁸ See Appendix 25 for an example of the reports on the students' results

¹⁴⁹ The umbrella term *insurance* is in general use to cover all aspects of coverage against risk. However, the word correctly denotes risks which *might* happen, whereas *assurance* refers to events which are sure to occur eventually, such as death.

¹⁵⁰ Bodichon spent much of her time abroad, after her marriage in 1857, which probably explains why she was not a member of any of SPEW's Committees after 1862. Nevertheless, she maintained close links with a number of the other members, including Boucherett, through her many other public campaigns

¹⁵¹ Maria Rye, a friend of Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (BLSB), had been one of the signatories of BLSB's petition in 1856 on behalf of the Law Amendment Society (and see 3.4, EN.66). She had also been one of the two unsuccessful applicants for the job of SPEW's Secretary - a post to which Jane Crowe was appointed in 1860, serving in that capacity for the next four years. A letter which Rye wrote to *The Times* (28.4.1862) on the subject of emigration is included as Appendix 26

¹⁵² Elizabeth Crosby was aged 30 at this date. It may be assumed that she met her future husband Hugo Müller, who was 12 years her senior, through her business, as he is listed in the 1881 Census as 'Wholesale Stationer'

¹⁵³ Mrs Müller (née Crosby) was elected to SPEW's Committee in 1879, and continued to serve as a member for over forty years (*GCM* 4.4.1879)

¹⁵⁴ See Grogan 1883:88

¹⁵⁵ She was quoting from a memorandum dated 30 March 1875 written by G R Smith, the Controller of the Post Office's Returned Letter Office

¹⁵⁶ See EN.114 for acknowledgement to Dr Jordan, who also provided the reference POST 30/275 D [E 3613/1875] File No.V. Dr Jordan noted that the first time women appeared in the Register List for Civil Service Examinations was 1875, when 13 women were examined. A further 16 were examined in 1876, but there are no further mentions of female candidates after that date. In a report to her governors 28.6.1875, Frances Buss (principal of the NLCS) recorded that five of her old pupils had been successful in those 1875 examinations

¹⁵⁷ File No IV, POST 30/275 [E 3613/1875]. Lady Janetta Manners, Lord John's wife, is referred to in EN.144

¹⁵⁸ In an early reference to Lord John Manners, SPEW's Minutes recorded that Miss Buss had asked 'any members present' who might know that gentlemen, if they would 'speak to him privately' about a complaint made to her by some of her ex-pupils, who were now working at the PO Savings Bank but were

not receiving the remuneration which they had been led to expect under their conditions of appointment (*GCM* 28.1.1876)

¹⁵⁹ 'Half-past nine until half-past five; excepting on Saturdays, when they leave off working at four o'clock. An hour is allowed for dinner, which must be eaten on the premises.' (*Grogan* 1883:86)

¹⁶⁰ One such was that of Mrs Hoster. Later, a student from her well-respected establishment became the owner/principal of another prestigious (residential) secretarial college, attended during the early 1940s by two of the informants contributing to my evidence for Chapter 6

¹⁶¹ It is interesting to note that the Committee apparently 'approved' of Isaac Pitman's Metropolitan School at this date (1883) as over forty years later – with different people serving on the Committee – they viewed his approaches for mutual collaboration with great suspicion (see Chapter 4, 4.5)

¹⁶² My own personal history can testify to the fact that male shorthand-typists were still being employed by companies during the 1950s. However, I found that when I taught shorthand and typewriting during the early 1960s, the only males seeking to learn shorthand were those training to be journalists

¹⁶³ Miss Oppenheim was obviously convinced that SPEW was an effective medium for women's entry into new employment, as she wrote again some months later, suggesting that they should try to introduce females as Ticket Issuers on the London, Dover and Chatham Railway (*GCM* 10.2.1864)

¹⁶⁴ There were frequent parallels with the 'accomplishment' of piano-playing, which most middle-class girls were expected to demonstrate. I found, when I was teaching typewriting to both boys and girls during the 1960s, that those pupils showing an easy facility with the keyboard were those who could also play the piano. However, I suspect that the differences between the sexes had more to do with the fact that boys' hands were generally much larger than girls', enabling the latter to strike the machines' fairly small keys more precisely

¹⁶⁵ Nevertheless, in spite of Lady Goldsmid's reservations, the General Committee did advance money for a training loan (to Ethel Garrett) on this occasion

¹⁶⁶ The slight discrepancy between this date and the one reported in the next paragraph, where Sir Algernon West mentions 1888, is probably due to the fact that many 'female type-writer copyists' were supplied (free) by the firm which furnished the typing machines (*Martindale* 1938:66). These were almost certainly Remingtons – Illustration 5.3

¹⁶⁷ My personal experience as a BBC typist 1952-1958 confirms that speeds in excess of 80 wpm were common amongst my colleagues, and the manual typewriters in use for much of that time were vastly superior to those of the 1880-90s. These BBC employees' speeds were greatly in excess of the average 'office typist'; the Victorian typists were therefore much to be admired for their achievements. Even using electric typewriters or computer keyboards, speeds of over 100 wpm are still exceptional in the 21st century

¹⁶⁸ The daughter of a vicar, and one of 14 children, Courtney had been one of the first students at Lady Margaret Hall, Oxford; she also taught at Cheltenham Ladies' College at one time

¹⁶⁹ *Martindale* also states that by 1914 there were about 600 women employed as shorthand-typists; by the time she was writing her book (in the 1930s) this number had grown to about 10,000

¹⁷⁰ Even in the twenty-first century, I find myself apologising or finding excuses if using typescript rather than handwriting when sending personal letters to elderly relatives or some other correspondents

¹⁷¹ There is a similar situation in the hairdressing trade in modern times: hairdressers are more reluctant to employ people who have been trained on full-time courses in technical colleges, believing that the 'artificial' college classrooms do not provide the same all-round competence that training within an individual firm offers

¹⁷² Private correspondence to me from Monica Rayne, Spencer Munt's niece, dated 30.7.2001

¹⁷³ St James's College survives to the present, although now under corporate ownership. I am grateful to its Principal, Tess Housden, for copies of their house magazine, *Jimmies' Journal*, for the years 1933 and 1934. (Private correspondence 12.7.2001)

¹⁷⁴ Miss Perkins was the teacher of the Mrs Irwin whose circumstances are mentioned elsewhere in this study (Chapter 4, 4.5, and see Appendix 22)

¹⁷⁵ The term 'white-blouse revolution' was the title chosen by Gregory Anderson for his study of turn-of-the-century female office employment (*Anderson* 1988). David Lockwood (1958) had used the phrase 'white-collared proletariat' to describe the changed composition in the social class of 'black-coated workers'

¹⁷⁶ It had been possible for children from poorer homes to attend grammar schools since the 1920s, via free scholarship places which were available to elementary-school children, but only eight per cent of such families accepted the scholarships offered to their children (Sanderson 1988:44). After the 1944 Education Act was implemented in 1945, secondary as well as primary education was free to all children, but selection for grammar-school places via the '11+' examination operated until well into the 1960s throughout the country, and continues to this day in a handful of British local authority areas

¹⁷⁷ The General School Certificate (GSC) was the school-leaving examination which pre-dated GCE O-levels, and was taken by 15-16-year-old children at grammar schools. In order to be awarded the Certificate, pupils had to pass in a minimum of five subjects, which must include English, two humanities subjects, a foreign language, another subject (usually a science), and an arithmetic paper. In order for a pupil to Matriculate, the latter had to be a mathematics paper, not simply arithmetic. Matriculation qualified the pupil to go on for sixth form courses leading to the Higher School Certificate (HSC), the entry level for university. Normally, Latin was amongst the subjects required, to at least GSC level, for admission to most degree courses

¹⁷⁸ Amongst my informants, one woman was born during the 'Edwardian' era; the rest were 'Georgians'

¹⁷⁹ This practice stemmed, of course, from the 1870s. For example at that time women telegraphists were paid 8s a week, rising to 20s at age 21, with a ceiling of £78 a year; men started at 12s, rising to £160 a year. (Martindale 1938:158)

¹⁸⁰ My own teaching career began during the academic year 1957-58, when women lecturers were still being paid a proportion of men's salaries: I received sixth-sevenths of the men's salary that first year; women achieved full parity the following year.

¹⁸¹ Candidates had to be 18 years of age in order to be eligible for Clerical Officer examinations

¹⁸² The marriage bar may not have been discarded until 1946, but a few women *had* overcome it during the previous decade. Martindale, writing in 1938, reported that 'between 1934 and 1938 eight women civil servants have been retained on marriage. The small number is not surprising, for the mesh of the sieve through which their applications have to go is a fine one. It has to be shown that they have special qualifications or special experience in relation to the duties required of them or that there are special requirements in the department in which they are serving' (Martindale 1938:156)

¹⁸³ The gratuity was paid at the rate of one month's pay for each year of service, but not exceeding twelve months' pay. Sanderson reported that the gratuity ceased to accumulate after 12 years, thus providing another 'subtle pressure on female civil servants to have short careers' (Sanderson 1986:155). (See Chapter 5, 5.3)

¹⁸⁴ The war did provide Mrs UU with one other potential 'opportunity': a man who was evacuated from London to her home area in 1940 invited her to be his (ballroom) dancing partner, with a view to becoming professionals; but as this would have meant moving to London, she felt that the offer was '*frivolous*' during wartime. She later saw him performing on television. She married in 1943, had three children, and from that point '*did not pursue a proper career*'.

¹⁸⁵ Pierre Bourdieu 'Cultural reproduction and social reproduction' in R. Brown (ed) 1973; and Halsey *et al.* 1980

¹⁸⁶ This comment was made by a woman who was a pupil at the school which I attended thirty-five years later, and my own experience could duplicate her remark, albeit under the régime of a different headteacher

¹⁸⁷ That such skills might still need attention in the twenty-first century was illustrated by a Radio 4 programme on 4 October 2001, which reported that some universities were starting courses in teaching people how to write letters, as computer- and mobile-phone-speak had led to a lack of knowledge regarding appropriate formats and forms of address

¹⁸⁸ The lack of resentment on the part of the interviewees about this degree of control seemed to me to be surprising. Not even from the perspective of a long life were the women expressing any dissatisfaction with their cultural socialisation

¹⁸⁹ My personal recollections of 1940s-50s school days are full of similar exhortations, as were those of many younger women of my acquaintance. My own teaching experience indicates that it was the advent of mixed-sex comprehensive schools after the mid-1970s which finally allowed such rules to be relaxed

¹⁹⁰ 'Not eating in the street' was a taboo which many informants admitted had continued to control their behaviour for the rest of their lives

¹⁹¹ Tables 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3 extrapolate some of the information from Table 6.6, which presents a summary of all the factual evidence provided by my informants

¹⁹² The informant who worked for Shell Oil was the youngest in the study and as a result had experienced a working environment closer to post-war than pre-war conditions. Nevertheless, she married young, mothered five children, and *never* worked abroad, which had been her reason for choosing that company in the first place

¹⁹³ I investigated the significance of this reference to time-and-motion study, as it was a matter brought up by other interviewees (Mrs NN and Mrs OO). Huntley & Palmers achieved a considerable degree of adverse publicity in the local press by appointing a team of American 'efficiency experts' in the late 1920s who used the Bedaux System, which was designed to increase output by eliminating unnecessary movements. The scheme was extended to all departments over the next few years, and achieved a net saving for the company of £95,000 by 1932 – nearly £20,000 annually during the period (Corley 1972). The resultant reorganisation of some departments left many people unhappy, although Mrs OO reported that she was '*very lucky. They reduced our office staff to one man and two girls so I had a lot of extra work put on me, for which I did get a substantial rise so I can't complain!*' Mrs NN remembered it as '*very unpopular ... it was one of the Big Brother sort of things!*'

¹⁹⁴ The statutory school-leaving age of 15 came into effect in 1947; it was raised to 16 in 1972

¹⁹⁵ With the exception of Marion Angus, who travelled the world in the 1950s demonstrating her ability to write shorthand at 325 words per minute (wpm), 120-130 wpm is considered a very good speed for most top secretaries [see Foreword to Hardwick-Smith and Rowe (1958) for information regarding Angus]. Shorthand-writers employed by Hansard (parliamentary reporters) needed speeds in excess of 150 wpm

¹⁹⁶ The dearth of well-educated shorthand-typists during the 1960s led to the new title of 'personal assistant' (PA), which better personified the more elevated responsibilities of a private secretary and was thought to attract better-qualified applicants

¹⁹⁷ 'Deskilling' implies that an activity has been split up into a number of separate tasks, each requiring minimal expertise, which can be learnt quickly by an operator (routinized). An example might be the photocopying department in a multinational company: although thousands of people might work in the organisation, the copier operators are not expected to be capable of deputising for colleagues in other departments: they are seen only as 'experts' in the one field (with a salary scale reflecting the narrowness of their expertise)

¹⁹⁸ Human capital theory suggests that broken work experience outweighs even the possession of further formal qualifications, making women who interrupt work for family reasons 'simply not deserving of promotion' (Crompton and Jones (1984:144)

¹⁹⁹ Whereas in 1911 only 14.1 per cent of working women were married, this percentage rose to about 43 in 1951, to 53 in 1961, and about 59 by 1970 (Holcombe 1973:217)

²⁰⁰ See for example Griffin (1985); Sharpe (1976); and Oakley (1974)

²⁰¹ My own M.Phil research established that the majority of girls did not even study the same subjects as boys, and were therefore not in a position to apply for apprenticeships or training specifying technical drawing, physics, chemistry, metalwork or woodwork. The few girls who did take such subjects - even the most able - invariably achieved lower examination grades than boys (Bridger 1987)

²⁰² This retailer specialised in the fitting of children's shoes. The term 'practipedics' refers to 'the science of giving foot comfort and correcting the cause of foot and shoe troubles'. (My thanks to Dr Joanna Moe for this definition)

²⁰³ It may be recalled that Mrs OO's boarding-school headmistress had hoped to persuade her to become a languages teacher of foreign languages – see paragraph 6.6

²⁰⁴ As noted elsewhere in this study, the outlet for many – myself included – led to higher education as a mature student, and thence, invariably, into teaching

²⁰⁵ Mrs JJ was older than the other interviewees when she first found a job. She had been 'channelled' into attending the university as a trainee teacher, but soon switched her course to Commerce. After qualifying, she took 'some months' to find work, after leaving university at about age 22. After working for eight years, she was older than the majority of the other informants when she married

²⁰⁶ I interviewed these women together on the first occasion; later I had further contact with Miss KK. She reported that she had initially been sent on a cookery course, as '*my mother's main thought was that*

the way to the altar was being able to be a good cook. ... but it was like a prison to me' (Miss KK, b.1927)

²⁰⁷ By the time of this episode, Mrs FF had already achieved her Open University degree

²⁰⁸ Courtney's description of her 'job interview' is worth reporting. Having heard 'accidentally that the Secretary to the newly-appointed Royal Commission on Labour was seeking university women with a good knowledge of modern languages for temporary clerkships' she 'walked in and applied' (Courtney 1926:134). It was a Saturday, and Geoffrey Drage, the Secretary, was in a hurry to be off. 'After reading my testimonials and asking me a few questions as to my university record, he flung me a German book of a hundred pages and more and said that if I would bring him a précis of it by Monday afternoon, he would see if he could give me an appointment.' She toiled all Saturday evening, all day Sunday and finished at about 10 pm that night. She got the job. (Courtney *ibid.*:134-5)

²⁰⁹ This comment excluded her boss's wife, who occasionally accompanied her managing-director husband to the office

²¹⁰ As this conversation had occurred only six years prior to my contact with Mrs BB, this comment indicates a recognition that concerns about 'office romances' are a feature of present-day culture

²¹¹ This marriage had gone through a somewhat shaky period, during which time Mrs OO took a residential secretarial post. She and her husband were eventually reconciled, and remained together until his death in the 1990s.

²¹² 'Innocent' associations are referred to, not 'affairs' in the modern use of such terms

²¹³ Talcott Parsons, one of the 'founding fathers' of sociology, suggested that woman's rôle in the family is 'expressive' – she provides warmth, security and emotional support. The male's instrumental rôle needs her support in order to cope with the stress and anxieties of competing in an achievement-oriented society; thus it is necessary for there to be a clear-cut sexual division of labour for the family to operate efficiently as a social system (Parsons 1955; 1961)

²¹⁴ Such publications include Leafe 1964, reprinted 1965; Whitcomb *Strictly for Secretaries* 1959; and weekly and monthly magazines such as *Pitman's Office Training*, or *Pitman's Business Education*

²¹⁵ She gives as a reference Whitcomb 1959:82 (see previous footnote). Although I was familiar with this book during my youth, I have been unable to find a copy of it, even at the British Library

²¹⁶ However, there are no reported comments from secretaries regarding the requisite hygiene standards of their bosses

²¹⁷ This is an example of my awareness that by not asking such questions, I have missed opportunities to add a further dimension to my report. Follow-up interviews with the informants might have included such topics

²¹⁸ Earlier chapters have also drawn attention to the importance of 'approved' clothing for office wear: from Victorian times female clerical workers were expected to dress in particular ways (see for example Chapter 4, 4.5 regarding the Bank of England; and the unacceptability of the wearing of trousers by women staff in other establishments)

²¹⁹ See Hirsch 1998:217

²²⁰ Note that of my informants, those from middle-class homes, who had benefited from residential post-school courses, had very different job aspirations and experiences from the women who had left school for work at ages fourteen or fifteen. A similar conclusion was reported by another researcher – see Silverstone 1975. She noted that such secretaries were also more likely to have better educational qualifications than other shorthand-typists (for example GCE O and A levels, or degrees)

²²¹ Korda M (1974) *Male Chauvinism: How It Works* London, Barrie & Jenkins

²²² But not according to the British Registrar-General, as noted above

²²³ However, Mrs Hoster did co-launch a Typists' Union in 1899 (*GCM* 12.5.1899)

²²⁴ Since the completion of this study I have found that some correspondence from Jessie Boucherett to Helen Taylor has survived. As these letters relate almost exclusively to Boucherett's involvement in the suffrage campaign, they add little to my thesis but do confirm that she was centrally involved in that movement until her death (Mill-Taylor Collection, Vol.XIV, British Library of Political and Economic Science)

REFERENCES

- Alexandra Magazine The. "Association for Promoting the Employment of Women." *Alexandra Magazine and English Woman's Journal* 1 (1864): 54-57.
- . "Law-Copying as an Employment for Women." *Alexandra Magazine and Woman's Social and Industrial Advocate* 1864, 305-8.
- Anderson, G. *Victorian Clerks*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1976.
- , ed. *The White-Blouse Revolution*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988.
- Anderson, K, and D C Jack. "Learning to Listen: Interview Techniques and Analyses." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by S Gluck and D Patai. NY & London: Routledge, 1991.
- Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. London: Penguin Classics, 1972 (1813).
- Bain, George Sayers, Robert Bacon, and John Pimlott. "The Labour Force." In *Trends in British Society since 1900*, edited by A H Halsey. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1972.
- Banks, Olive. *Becoming a Feminist. The Social Origins of 'First Wave' Feminism*. Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986.
- . *Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists 1800-1930*. Vol. One. London & NY: Harvester Press, 1985.
- . *Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists*. Vol. Two: A Supplement 1900-1945. London & NY: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1990.
- . *Faces of Feminism. A Study of Feminism as a Social Movement*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1981 reprinted 1990.
- Barker, D L, and S Allen, eds. *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage*. London: Longman, 1976.
- Beddoe, Deirdre. *Discovering Women's History: A Practical Guide to Researching the Lives of Women since 1800*. London: Longman, 1998.
- Benét, M K. *Secretary*. London: Sidgwick & Jackson, 1972.
- Blackburn, Helen. "Caroline Ashurst Biggs, in Memoriam." *The Englishwoman's Review* CXCVI (1889): 385.
- . *Women's Suffrage: A Record of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the British Isles, with Biographical Sketches of Miss Becker*. London & Oxford: Williams and Norgate, 1902.
- Bliven Jnr, Bruce. *The Wonderful Writing Machine*. New York: Random House, 1954.
- Bogue, Ronald. *Deleuze and Guattari*. London: Routledge, 1989.
- Borer, M C. *Willingly to School*. Guildford & London: Lutterworth Press, 1975.
- Boucherett, J. "Adelaide Anne Procter." *The English Woman's Journal* XIII, no. 27 (1864): 17-21.
- . "The Condition of Women in France." *Contemporary Review* V (1867): 98-113.

- . "Endowed Schools, Their Uses and Shortcomings." *The English Woman's Journal* IX, no. 49 (1862): 20-28.
- . *Hints on Self-Help; a Book for Young Women*. London: S W Partridge, 1863.
- . "How to Provide for Superfluous Women." In *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, edited by Josephine Butler. London: Macmillan, 1869.
- . "How to Provide for Superfluous Women (Originally Published 1869)." In *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from 19th-Century England*, edited by Janet Horowitz Murray. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982.
- . "Local Societies." *The English Woman's Journal* VIII, no. 46 (1861): 217-23.
- . "On the Cause of the Distress Prevalent among Single Women." *The English Woman's Journal* XII, no. 72 (1864): 400-09.
- . "On the Obstacles to the Employment of Women." *The English Woman's Journal* IV, no. 24 (1860): 361-75.
- . "The Temperance Movement and Working Women." *The English Woman's Journal* XI (1863): 176-80.
- . "The Work We Have to Do." *The Englishwoman's Review* I, no. I (1866): 1-5.
- Boucherett, J, and H Blackburn. *The Condition of Working Women and the Factory Acts*. London: Elliot Stock, 1896.
- Boucherett, J. "Caroline Ashurst Biggs." *The Englishwoman's Review* CXCVI (1889): 387-89.
- . "The Industrial Movement." In *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays*, edited by Theodore Stanton. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1884.
- . "Legislative Restrictions on Women's Labour." *Englishwoman's Review (New Series)* XVI (1873): 249-58.
- Boucherett, Louisa. "Boucherett-Nightingale Correspondence." In *British Library Add.47758 ff*, 137-94. London, 1866.
- Bourdieu, P. "Cultural Reproduction and Social Reproduction." In *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*, edited by R Brown. London: Tavistock, 1973.
- Bridger, A. "Gertrude Jane King: More Than 'Just a Secretary'." 2003 in preparation.
- . "Processes of Gender Differentiation in the Selection of 4th and 5th Year Courses in a Mixed-Sex Comprehensive School." M.Phil, Bulmershe College of Higher Education, 1987.
- Brown, R, ed. *Knowledge, Education and Cultural Change*. London: Tavistock, 1973.
- . "Women as Employees: Some Comments on Research in Industrial Psychology." In *Dependence and Exploitation in Work and Marriage*, edited by D L Barker and S Allen. London: Longman, 1976.
- Burchell, Doris. *Miss Buss's Second School*. London: Frances Mary Buss Foundation, The Camden School for Girls, Sandall Road, London NW5 (privately published), 1971.
- Burstyn, J. *Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood*. London: Croom Helm, 1980.

- Burton, Hester. *Barbara Bodichon 1827-1891*. London: John Murray, 1949.
- Butler, Josephine E, ed. *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*. London: Macmillan, 1869.
- Caine, Barbara. *Victorian Feminists*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Caine, Barbara. *English Feminism 1780-1980*. reprint 2002 ed. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Cannell, C F, and R L Kahn. "Interviewing." *The Handbook of Social Psychology 2: Research Methods* (1968): 526-95.
- Cavendish, R. *Women on the Line*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.
- Chambers. *Biographical Dictionary*. Edinburgh: Chambers Harrap Publishers Ltd, 2002.
- Cherrington, C. "Are You a Typewriter?" In *Spare Rib Reader: 100 Issues in Women's Liberation*, edited by M Rowe, 179-80: Penguin, 1982.
- Cohen, L, L Manion, and K Morrison. *Research Methods in Education*. 5th ed. London: Routledge Falmer, 2000.
- Cohn, Samuel. *The Process of Occupational Sex-Typing: The Feminization of Clerical Labor in Great Britain*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1985.
- Corbet, Rose. "Obituary for Boucherett." *The Englishwoman's Review* CCLXVIII, no. 15 January (1906): 1-6.
- Corley, T.A.B. *Quaker Enterprise in Biscuits: Huntley & Palmers in Reading 1822-1972*. London: Hutchinson, 1972.
- Correspondence, BL Add.47758137 Boucherett/Nightingale. 1866.
- Courtney, Janet. *Recollected in Tranquillity*. London: William Heinemann Ltd, 1926.
- Craig, John. *A History of Red Tape. An Account of the Origin and Development of the Civil Service*. London: Macdonald & Evans Ltd, 1955.
- Crawford, Elizabeth. *Enterprising Women: The Garretts and Their Circle*. London: Francis Boutle, 2002.
- . *The Women's Suffrage Movement. A Reference Guide 1866-1928*. London & NY: Routledge, 1999.
- Crompton, R. *Class and Stratification: An Introduction to Current Debates*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993.
- . *Women & Work in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997.
- Crompton, R, and S Jones. *White-Collar Proletariat: Deskilling and Gender in Clerical Work*. London: Macmillan Press, 1984.
- Crompton, R, and M Mann, eds. *Gender and Stratification*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1986.
- Crompton, R, and K Sanderson. *Gendered Jobs & Social Change*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1990.
- Crow, Duncan. *The Victorian Woman*. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971.

- Davidoff, L, and B Westover, eds. *Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words. Women's History & Women's Work*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986.
- Davies, M. *Woman's Place Is at the Typewriter: Office Work and Office Workers 1870-1930*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1982.
- Davis, Emily. "Local Societies." *The English Woman's Journal* VIII, no. 46 (1861): 223-26.
- Delamont, S. *Fieldwork in Educational Settings: Methods, Pitfalls & Perspectives*. London & Washington DC: The Falmer Press, 1992.
- Delgado, Alan. *The Enormous File: A Social History of the Office*. London: John Murray, 1979.
- Denzin, Norman K, and Yvonna S Lincoln, eds. *Handbook of Qualitative Research*. 2nd ed. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications Inc., 2000.
- Dingsdale, Ann. "Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and Her Circle of Friends 1850-1870." M.A., Thames Polytechnic, 1989.
- . "Generous and Lofty Sympathies: The Kensington Society, the 1866 Women's Suffrage Petition and the Development of Mid-Victorian Feminism." Ph.D, University of Greenwich, 1995.
- DNB. *Dictionary of National Biography*. Oxford: OUP, 1905.
- Dyhouse, C. *Feminism and the Family in England 1880-1939*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1989.
- . *Girls Growing up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1981.
- EWJ. "Association for Promoting the Employment of Women." *The English Woman's Journal* IV, no. 19 (1859): 54-60.
- . "Irish Society for Promoting the Employment of Educated Women." *The English Woman's Journal* VIII, no. 46 (1861b): 226-29.
- . "Northumberland and Durham Branch of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women." *The English Woman's Journal* VIII, no. 46 (1861a): 223-26.
- . "Report of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, for the Year Ending June 24th, 1862." *The English Woman's Journal* IX, no. 54 (1862): 377-79.
- . "Tuition or Trade? By A.R.L." *The English Woman's Journal* V, no. 27 (1860): 173-83.
- EWV. "Civil Service Inquiry Commission." *The Englishwoman's Review* XXVII, 6 (1875): 297-301.
- . "Emilia Jessie Boucherett (Obituary)." *The Englishwoman's Review* CCLXVIII January 15 (1906): 1-6.
- . "Legislative Restrictions on Women's Labour." *The Englishwoman's Review* XVI New Series (1873): 249-58.
- . "Report by the Lady Assistant Commissioners on the Employment of Women (Cont.)." *The Englishwoman's Review* CCXXII New Series (1894 July): 149-56.

- . "The Report on the Employment of Women, by the Lady Assistant Commissioners." *The Englishwoman's Review* CCXX New Series (1894, Jan.): 1-14.
- . "The Report on the Employment of Women, by the Lady Assistant Commissioners (Continued)." *The Englishwoman's Review* CCXXI New Series (1894 Apr.): 73-79.
- Fielding, N. "Qualitative Interviewing." In *Researching Social Life*, edited by N Gilbert. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.
- Fowler, Floyd J Jr. *Survey Research Methods*. 2nd ed. Newbury Park, Calif.: Sage, 1993.
- Frost, S. "Secretarial Training: Some Historical Aspects." B.Ed., Westminster College, 1981.
- GFS. "Conference of the Department." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* May (1886): 76.
- . "Department for Members in Professions and Business." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* October (1886): 168.
- . "The Department for Members in Professions and Business (Cont.2)." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* June (1885): 92.
- . "The Department for Members in Professions and Business (Cont.)." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* April (1885): 68.
- . "The Department for Members in Professions and Business: Its Work and Progress." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* February (1885): 40.
- . "G F S Lodges and Lodgings Department." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* July (1884): 87.
- . "The Literary Work of the G F S in Connexion with the Department for Members in Professions and Business." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* August (1885): 117-21.
- . "Members in Business." *Girls' Friendly Society. Associates' Journal and Advertiser* June (1884): 74-75.
- Gilbert, N, ed. *Researching Social Life*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.
- Gittins, D. "Oral History, Reliability and Recollection." In *The Recall Method in Social Surveys*, edited by L Moss and H Goldstein. London: University of London Institute of Education, 1979.
- Glaser, B, and A Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory*. Chicago: Aldine, 1967.
- Gluck, S B, and Patai D, eds. *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*. NY & London: Routledge, 1991.
- Glucksman, M. "The Work of Knowledge and the Knowledge of Women's Work." In *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*, edited by M Maynard and J Purvis. London: Taylor and Francis, 1994.
- GOP. "Female Clerkships in the Post Office." *Girl's Own Paper*, 12 July 1883 1883, 663.
- . "Prize-Winning Essays." *Girl's Own Paper*, 27 February 1897 1897, 414-15.
- . "The Type-Writer and Type-Writing." *Girl's Own Paper*, 11 August 1888 1888, 745-46.

- . "Work for All." *Girl's Own Paper*, 24 November 1883, 119-20.
- Gorham, D. "The Ideology of Femininity and Reading for Girls, 1850-1914." In *Lessons for Life*, edited by F Hunt, 39-59. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Greg, W R. "Why Are Women Redundant?" *National Review* 14 (1862): 434-60.
- Grogan, Mercy. *How Women May Earn a Living*. One shilling, third cheap ed. London: Cassell & Co. Ltd, 1883.
- Hakim, C. "Occupational Segregation: A Comparative Study of the Degree and Pattern of the Differentiation between Men and Women's Work in Britain, the United States and Other Countries. Research Paper 9." London: Department of Employment, HMSO, 1979.
- . *Social Change and Innovation in the Labour Market*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.
- Halsey, A H. "Higher Education." In *Trends in British Society since 1900*, edited by A H Halsey, 192-226. London: Macmillan, 1972.
- , ed. *Trends in British Society since 1900*. London: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1972.
- Halsey, A H, A F Heath, and J M Ridge. *Origins and Destinations: Family, Class and Education in Modern Britain*. Oxford: Clarendon, 1980.
- Hannam, J. "Women and Politics." In *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945. An Introduction*, edited by J Purvis, 217-45. London: UCL Press, 1995.
- Hardwick-Smith, S, and B Rowe, and M Angus (Foreword). *The Private Secretary*. London: Museum Press Ltd, 1958.
- Harrison, John. "Type-Writers and Type-Writing." *Journal of the Royal Society of Arts* 17 February (1888): 345-55.
- Hatch, A J, and R Wisniewski, eds. *Life History and Narrative, Qualitative Studies*. London: The Falmer Press, 1995.
- Hicks, Phyllis D. *A Quest for Ladies: The Story of a Warwickshire School*. Birmingham: The Press of Frank Juckes Ltd, n.d. (1950).
- Hirsch, P. *Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon 1827-1891: Feminist, Artist and Rebel. A Biography*. London: Chatto & Windus, 1998. Reprint, London Pimlico 1999.
- . "Wollstonecraft: A Problematic Legacy." In *Wollstonecraft's Daughters. Womanhood in England and France 1780-1920*, edited by Clarissa Campbell Orr, 43-60. Manchester & NY: Manchester University Press, 1996.
- Holcombe, Lee. *Victorian Ladies at Work: Middle-Class Working Women in England and Wales 1850-1914*. Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1973.
- Holland, J. "Work and Women: A Review of Explanations for the Maintenance and Reproduction of Sexual Divisions." In *Bedford Way Paper 6*, edited by University of London Institute of Education. London: Tinga Tinga, branch of Heinemann Educational Books, 1980.
- Houlston, Industrial Library. "The Clerk: A Sketch in Outline of His Duties and Discipline." *Houlston's Industrial Library* 1878.

- Howe, B. *Arbiter of Elegance*. London: The Harvill Press Limited, 1967.
- Huberman, M A, and M B Miles. *The Qualitative Researcher's Companion*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage, 2002.
- Hudson, Ernest. "Charles Dickens 1812-1870." In *International University Reading Course*, 206-7. London: International University Society, 1920.
- . "Charles Dickens 1812-1870." In *International University Reading Course*, 206-7. London: International University Society, 1920.
- Hunt, F, ed. *Lessons for Life. The Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1987.
- ILN. "Electric and International Telegraph Company, Great Bell Alley." *The Illustrated London News* (1859): 649.
- Jack, Dana C. "Interview Analysis: Listening for Meaning." In *Women's Words: The Feminist Practice of Oral History*, edited by Gluck S B and Patai D. NY and London: Routledge, 1991.
- Jameson, Anna. "Condition of the Women and the Female Children." *Athenaeum* (1843): 257-9.
- . *Memoirs and Essays Illustrative of Art, Literature and Social Morals*. London: Bentley, 1846.
- Jameson, Mrs. *Sisters of Charity, Catholic and Protestant and the Communion of Labor*. Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1857. Reprint, 1976 Hyperion.
- John, A, ed. *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*. Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.
- Jordan, E, and A Bridger. "Choosing a Feminist Identity: Jessie Boucherett and the Importance of Being Wealthy." *in preparation* (2003).
- Jordan, Ellen. "The Great Principle of English Fair-Play: Male Champions, the English Women's Movement and the Admission of Women to the Pharmaceutical Society in 1879." *Women's History Review* 7, no. 3 (1998): 381-409.
- . "The Lady Clerks at the Prudential: The Beginning of Vertical Segregation by Sex in Clerical Work in Nineteenth-Century Britain." *Gender & History* 8, no. 1 (1996): 65-81.
- . "'Suitable and Remunerative Employment': The Feminisation of Hospital Dispensing in Late Nineteenth Century England." *Social History of Medicine* 15, no. 3 (2002): 429-56.
- . *The Women's Movement and Women's Employment in Nineteenth Century Britain*. London: Routledge, 1999a.
- . "Women's Work in the World: The Birth of a Discourse, London, 1857." *Nineteenth-Century Feminisms*, no. 1 (1999b): 12-38.
- Jordanova, Ludmilla. *History in Practice*. London: Arnold, 2000.
- Keep, Christopher. "The Cultural Work of the Type-Writer Girl." *Victorian Studies* 40, no. 3 (1997): 401-26.

- Leach, T, and R Pacey. "Lost Lincolnshire Country Houses No.1." Burgh le Marsh: Old Chapel Lane Books. 1992.
- Leafe, M. *Teenager in the Office*. London: Allman, 1964.
- Leicestershire, C.C. *Historically Significant Leicester Who's Who* Webpage, 2002 [cited 2002].
- Lockwood, D. *The Blackcoated Worker*. 2nd ed. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989.
- Lockwood, David. *The Blackcoated Worker: A Study in Class Consciousness*. reprinted 1969 ed. London: Geo. Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1958.
- Lofland, J, and L Lofland. *Analysing Social Settings: A Guide to Qualitative Observation and Analysis*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 1984.
- Martindale, H. *Women Servants of the State 1870-1938. A History of Women in the Civil Service*. London: Geo Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1938.
- Martineau, Harriet. "Female Industry." *Edinburgh Review* April, no. 109 (1859): 293-336.
- Maynard, M, and J Purvis, eds. *Researching Women's Lives from a Feminist Perspective*. London: Taylor and Francis, 1994.
- McMillan, Norman, ed. *Prometheus's Fire, a History of Scientific and Technological Education in Ireland*: Tyndall Publications, 2000.
- McNally, F. *A Study of the Female Office Worker*. London: Macmillan, 1979.
- Miles, M, and M Huberman. *Qualitative Enquiry and Research Design*. California, London and New Delhi: Sage, 1994.
- Mitchell, S. *The New Girl: Girls' Culture in England, 1880-1915*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1995.
- Moss, Frances. "Pitman: 150 Years of Innovation in Business Education (Commemorative Booklet)." 1-16. London: Pitman Publishing, 1987.
- Moss, L, and H Goldstein, eds. *The Recall Method in Social Surveys*. London: University of London Institute of Education, 1979.
- Murray, Janet Horowitz. *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from 19th-Century England*. First published 1982 in USA by Pantheon Books, division of Random House ed. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982.
- Newsom, Sir John. "Half Our Future." London: H.M.S.O., 1963.
- NLCS. "North London Collegiate School Archives Rs2iii." 2003.
- NLCS, North London Collegiate School. *History of the School* [website]. 2003 [cited 2003].
- Orr, Clarissa Campbell, ed. *Wollstonecraft's Daughters. Womanhood in England and France 1780-1920*. Manchester & New York: Manchester University Press, 1996.
- Parkes, Bessie Rayner. "The Condition of Working Women in England and France." *The English Woman's Journal* VIII, no. 43 (1861): 1-9.

- . "How to Utilize the Powers of Women." *The English Woman's Journal* III, no. 13 (1859): 34-47.
- . "Letters to Women on Money Earning." *The Alexandra Magazine* (1864): 57.
- . *Remarks on the Education of Girls, with Reference to the Social, Legal and Industrial Position of Women in the Present Day*. London: John Chapman, 1856.
- . "A Year's Experience in Woman's Work." *The English Woman's Journal* IV, no. 32 (1860): 112-21.
- Patmore, C. *The Poems of Coventry Patmore*. London: Oxford University Press, 1949.
- Perkin, Joan. *Victorian Women*. London: John Murray, 1993.
- Postmaster-General. "Nineteenth Report on the Post Office." House of Commons Sessional Papers Vol. XVIII, 1873.
- . "Twentieth Report on the Post Office." House of Commons Sessional Papers Vol. XV, 1874.
- Pringle, R. *Secretaries Talk: Sexuality, Power and Work*. London and New York: Verso, but first published Allen & Unwin, Australia 1988, 1989.
- Prochaska, F K. *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England*. Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980.
- Punch. *Pictures from Punch*. Vol. III & IV. London: Bradbury, Agnew & Co Ltd, 1895.
- Purvis, June. *Hard Lessons. The Lives and Education of Working-Class Women in Nineteenth-Century England*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 1989.
- , ed. *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945. An Introduction*. 1997 ed. London: UCL Press, 1995.
- Reinharz, S. *Feminist Methods in Social Research*. Oxford and NY: Oxford University Press, 1992.
- Rendall, Jane, ed. *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- . "A Moral Engine: Feminism, Liberalism and the Englishwoman's Journal." In *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, edited by Jane Rendall, 112-38. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.
- Richardson, Laurel. "Postmodern Social Theory: Representational Practices." *Sociological Theory* 9, no. 2 (1991): 173-79.
- . "Writing: A Method of Inquiry." In *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, edited by Norman K Denzin and Yvonna S Lincoln, 923-48. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications Inc, 2000.
- Riessman, C K. *Narrative Analysis, Qualitative Research Methods Vol. 9*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1993.
- , ed. *Qualitative Studies in Social Work Research*. London: Sage Publications Ltd, 1994.
- Roberts, E. *Women's Work 1840-1940*. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1988.
- Robinson, W. *Pupil Teachers and Their Professional Training in Pupil-Teacher Centres in England and Wales, 1870-1914, Mellen Studies in Education Vol. 76*. Lewiston, Queenston, Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press, 2003.

Rollett, C, and J Parker. "Population and Family." In *Trends in British Society since 1900*, edited by A H Halsey. London: MacMillan Press Ltd, 1972.

Rose, J. *Industrial Behaviour: Theoretical Development since Taylor*. London: Allen Lane, 1975.

Rowe, M, ed. *Spare Rib Reader: 100 Issues of Women's Liberation*: Penguin, 1982.

Rudduck, Jean. "Developing a Gender Policy in Schools: Individuals and Institutions." *The Cambridge Review* (1994): 69-73.

Rye, Maria S. "Letter to the Editor of the Times." *The Times*, 1862.

Sanderson, K. "A Pension to Look Forward To? Women Civil Service Clerks in London, 1925-1939." In *Our Work, Our Lives, Our Words. Women's History and Women's Work*, edited by Leonore Davidoff and Belinda Westover. Basingstoke: Macmillan Education, 1986.

———. "Social Mobility in the Life Cycle of Some Women Clerical Workers." PhD, University of Essex, 1988.

Saturday, Review. "Industrial Occupations of Women (a Critique of Barbara Bodichon's 'Women & Work')." *The Saturday Review*, 18 July 1857, 63-64.

———. "(on Langham Place)." *The Saturday Review*, 7 January 1860.

Scudamore, F. "Women as Telegraph Clerks (1871)." In *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from 19th-Century England*, edited by J Horowitz Murray, 321-2. Harmondsworth: Penguin Books Ltd, 1982.

Scudamore, Frank. "Report by Mr Scudamore on the Re-Organization of the Telegraph System of the United Kingdom." London: HMSO, 1871.

Silverstone, Rosalie. "Just a Sec? ... Or How I Learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Boss." *Personnel Management* 7, no. 6 (1975): 33-36.

Smiles, Samuel. *Self-Help. With Illustrations of Conduct and Perseverance*. 1969 ed. London: John Murray, 1859.

Smith, Barbara Leigh. *A Brief Summary in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women*. London, 1854.

———. *Women and Work*. London: Bosworth and Harrison. 1857.

SPEW. "Pamphlet." 1-12: GCIP SPTW 4/1, 1879.

SPTW. "Publicity Brochure." Society for Promoting the Training of Women, 2002.

Stanley, Maude. *Clubs for Working Girls*. London: Macmillan & Co, 1890.

Stanton, Theodore, ed. *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays*. London: Sampson Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1884.

Strauss, Anselm L. *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987 reprinted 1991.

Summerfield, P, ed. *Women, Education and the Professions., History of Education Society Occasional Publication No.8*, 1987a.

Summerfield, P. "Cultural Reproduction in the Education of Girls: A Study of Girls' Secondary Schooling in Two Lancashire Towns, 1900-50." In *Lessons for Life: The Schooling of Girls and Women 1850-1950*, edited by F Hunt. Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987.

Tilly, Louise, and Jane Scott. *Women, Work and Family*. New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1978.

Times, The. "Obituary Emilia Jessie Boucherett." *The Times*, 21 October 1905, 8.

———. "Our Telegraphic System: Frank Scudamore's Report." *The Times*, 2 June 1871, 4.

Todd, Margaret. *The Life of Sophia Jex-Blake*. London: Macmillan, 1918.

Tusan, M E. "Not the Ordinary Victorian Charity: The Society for Promoting the Employment of Women Archive." *History Workshop Journal*, no. 49 (2000): 221-29.

University, International. *International University Reading Course. Text Matter. Section I., Section 1*. London: International University Society, 1920.

W.I.N. "Interim Report of an Inquiry into the Conditions of the Typing Profession." *The Women's Industrial News* June (1898): 45-48.

Walker, Linda. "Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890-1914." In *Equal or Different. Women's Politics 1800-1914*, edited by Jane Rendall, 165-91. Oxford: Blackwell, 1987.

Watson, L C, and M B Watson-Franke. *Interpreting Life Histories: An Anthropological Inquiry*. New Brunswick: N J Rutgers University Press, 1985.

West, J, ed. *Work, Women and the Labour Market*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982.

Willmott, P, and Young M. *Family and Class in a London Suburb*. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1960.

Wollstonecraft, Mary. *A Vindication of the Rights of Women*. Boston: Peter Edes, 1792.

Young, M, and P Willmott. *Family and Kinship in East London*. 1986 ed. London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1957.

Young Woman, The. "The Lady Clerk. What She Ought to Know, and What She Has to Do by O.P.V." *The Young Woman* (1892-1893a): 262-3.

———. "Women Who Work." *The Young Woman* (1894-1895): 230.

Zimmeck, M. "Jobs for the Girls: The Expansion of Clerical Work for Women 1850-1914." In *Unequal Opportunities: Women's Employment in England 1800-1918*, edited by A John. London: Blackwell, 1986.

APPENDIX 1

SPEW/SPTW Listings, Girton College Archive, Cambridge

GCIP SPTW 1 Society for Promoting the Training of Women: Minutes

The originators of minutes are not always evident as the minute books aren't all labelled. Minutes assumed to be those of the SPTW are sometimes possibly of associated bodies such as the Central Bureau for Employment of Women (the case in some volumes of the Executive Committee). These have been identified where possible. The General and Managing Committees seem to amalgamate in 1902.

1860–1988

GCIP SPTW 1/1SPTW, General Committee

Minutes of the General Committee

Volume 1 (1860-1901) includes list of committee members, 1860, and rules of the society. Item I of the Rules of 1860 states that the Society is established in connection with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science (though mention of affiliation is dropped from headed paper and Rules after 13 June 1879).

1860–1916 – 3 volumes

GCIP SPTW 1/2SPTW, Managing Committee

The General and Managing Committees amalgamated: the latter ceased to have separate minutes from 13 June 1902. The *Managing Committee* was set up via Item VII of the original Rules -- recorded in the minutes of the first meeting of the General Committee, 11 January 1860. There does not appear to be a separate minute book prior to 1870, despite many references to the *Managing Committee's* business in the General Committee's minutes throughout the 1860s

Minutes of the Managing Committee

1870–1902 – 3 volumes

GCIP SPTW 1/3SPTW, Executive Committee; Central Bureau

Minutes of the Executive Committee

Incomplete set 1920-41 and 1981-88. Also included in volume 1 are minutes of the Higher Professions Intelligence Committee, 1914-1915. The minutes for 1920-41 appear to be the minutes of the Central Employment Bureau for Women and Students Careers Association before it was officially linked to SPTW. A note in volume 2 states that they were incorporated on 31 May 1923.

1914–1988 - 3 volumes and 1 file (1914-41 indexed)

GCIP SPTW 1/4SPTW, Executive Committee

Notes from meetings [of the Executive Committee]

Typescript and manuscript.

1923–1949 – 1 folder

GCIP SPTW 1/5SPTW, Consultative Committee

Minutes of the Consultative Committee

The first meeting is entitled Student Careers Association, Consultative Committee but from then on, Consultative Committee. From 1933, Student Consultative Association and Loan Fund Committee.

1910–1936 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 1/6SPTW, Loan Fund Committee

Minutes of the Loan Fund Committee

Including typewritten note from the Commissioner for Oaths, 1941. Volumes 1-2 indexed.

1920–1940

3 volumes (volumes 1 and 2 indexed)

GCIP SPTW 1/7SPTW, Central Bureau Loan Fund

Minutes of the Central Bureau Loan Fund Committee

1942–1968 – 2 volumes (indexed)

GCIP SPTW 1/8SPTW, Women's Loan Training Fund

Minutes of the Women's Loan Training Fund

1916–1932 – 6 volumes (indexed)

GCIP SPTW 1/9 SPTW, Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Loan Fund

Minutes of the Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Loan Fund Committee

1890–1898 – 1 volume

Minutes for this committee for 1899-90 are contained in the General Committee minute book as the SPEW secretary took minutes for this fund. Minutes for 1901-10 are contained in Mrs Haweis Loan Fund Committee minutes volume 2.

GCIP SPTW 1/10 SPTW, Mrs Haweis Memorial Loan Fund

Minutes of the Mrs Haweis Memorial Loan Fund Committee

1901–1942 – 3 volumes

GCIP SPTW 1/10/1 Society for Promoting the Training of Women

Minutes of the Mrs Haweis Memorial Loan Fund Committee: Vol. 1. In poor condition, some pages cannot be read.

Includes printed leaflet, "The Late Mrs H R Haweis' Memorial Fund for Poor Working Girls" with photograph of Mrs Haweis.

1901–1911 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 1/10/2 Society for Promoting the Training of Women

Minutes of the Mrs Haweis Memorial Loan Fund Committee: Vol. 2

1911-24; also includes minutes of the Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Loan Fund Committee, 1901-1910.

1901-1924 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 1/10/3 Society for Promoting the Training of Women

Minutes of the Mrs Haweis Memorial Loan Fund Committee: Volume 3. NB this volume (of loose pages in a binder) is arranged with the most recent date at the top.

1925-1942 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 1/11 SPTW, Helen Blackburn Memorial Fund

Minutes of the Helen Blackburn Memorial Fund

1904; also newspaper cuttings, 1903-5, from the following: The Dawn (Sydney); The Daily Telegraph; The British Times and Mirror; The Northern Whig (Belfast) (x2); The Guardian; The Standard (x2); The Times (x2); The Queen; The British Journal of Nursing; The Springfield Republican; also 'Helen Blackburn Memorial Fund' (pr.) [nd]; 'Helen Blackburn Memorial Fund Report' (pr.), 4 Oct 1905 (2 copies); 'Statement for Committee', (ms), 2 July 1907.

1903-1907 – 1 item

GCIP SPTW 1/12 SPTW, Sub-Committee Miss King's Pension

Minutes of the Sub-Committee on Miss King's Pension

1915; also list of attendance at annual meeting 1919.

1915-1919 – 1 item

GCIP SPTW 1/13 SPTW, Pioneer Loan Training Fund

Minutes of the Pioneer Loan Training Fund

Volume 1 includes 'Rules of the Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Loan Fund (pr.) [nd].

1937-1948 – 2 volumes

GCIP SPTW 1/14 Society for Promoting the Training of Women

Minutes of the [?] Committee

1933-1988 – 6 volumes

GCIP SPTW 2 Society for Promoting the Training of Women: Reports

1859-1989

GCIP SPTW 2/1 Annual Reports of the Society for Promoting the Training of Women

These reports are xerographic copies produced by University Microfilms Inc., Ann Arbor and London [1966].

1859–1958 – 7 volumes

GCIP SPTW 2/2 Annual Reports of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women

1897–1903 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 2/3 Annual Reports of the Society for Promoting the Training of Women

Unbound. Incomplete set.

1915–1989 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 2/4 Reports of the Irish Branch of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Educated Women

With the Annual Report of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women [London], 1862.

1861–1863 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3 Society for Promoting the Training of Women: Financial Records

1901–1991

GCIP SPTW 3/1 Account book

General accounts

1957–1983 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/2 Accounts for various Loan Funds

Including the Celtic, Central Bureau, Loan Training, Pfeiffer, Pioneer and Haweis funds.

1968–1987 - 2 volumes

GCIP SPTW 3/3 Income and expenditure accounts

1971–1980 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/4 Repayments to various Loan Funds

1980–1988 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/5 Repayments and payouts

Repayments to various Loan Funds, 1981-7, and payouts from Loan Funds, 1981-90

With Gordon A Simpson, of Clerical Medical, to D G Reid, Stewart Wrightson, Personal Financial Planning Ltd, 9 Sep 1987, and list of quarterly insurance payments [nd].

1981–1990 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/6 Address book

Containing miscellaneous notes (letters from the Law Society; letter to Mrs Golding; and repayment record for loans to the following women; Mrs ... , Mrs ... and Mrs ...). – 1 item

GCIP SPTW 3/7 Day-book transactions

1 Dec. 1981 - 9 Sep. 1988 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/8 Record of accounts

Including the following: Pfeiffer Fund; the Mrs Haweis Loan Training Fund; Loan Training Fund; Pioneer Loan Training Fund; Central Bureau Loan Fund; Celtic Fund and General Fund.

Dec. 1981 - Jan. 1989 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/9 Pfeiffer Fund: loans and repayments

1953–1986 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/10 Central Fund: loans and repayments

Labelled 'Book B loanees'.

1938 – 1976 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/11 Pioneer Loan Training Fund

Contains lists of subscribers (1937, 1943–45), 'rules and conditions under which loans are granted', and 'report of the PLFS' for 1901 and for 1902. 'Pioncers and Writers Club Ltd' 1934 and 'PLTF Income and Expenditure Account' 1946.

1901–1946 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 3/12 Mrs Haweis Memorial Loan Training Fund: repayment of loans

1907–1986 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/13 Central Bureau Fund: repayment of loans

1938–1984 – 1 volume

volume

GCIP SPTW 3/14 Pioneer Fund: repayment of loans

1949–1983 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/15 Loan Training Fund: repayment of loans

1953 – 1986 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/16 Index

Alphabetical list of individuals and organisations associated with the society.

1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/17 Petty cash

4 Dec. 1967 - 31 Aug. 1988 – 1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/18 Index of individuals and organisations

1 volume

GCIP SPTW 3/19 National Advisory Centre on Careers for Women: accounts

1971–1977 – 1 volume

- GCIP SPTW 3/20** **Register of members**
 Containing index of individuals and their donations [note on front 'In the High Court of Justice, Chancery Division, Mr Justice Russell, 1927'].
 1925–1975 – 1 item
- GCIP SPTW 3/21** **Bank statements**
 Coutts and Co, bankers: [general account]; Celtic Fund; Loan Training Fund; Pioneer Fund; Pfeiffer Fund.
 1986 – 5 items in 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 3/22** **End of year balance sheets**
 End of year balance sheets; statement of accounts; record of donations to Loan Funds; records of amounts outstanding to Loan Funds
 1920–1991 – 5 bundles, 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 3/23** **Records of loans and repayments**
 Record of loans and repayments and particulars of trainees
 1934–1972
 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 3/24** **Correspondence with Coutts and Co, bankers**
 There is a large gap in the middle of this correspondence. Two files are from 1902 until 1951. The later two files cover the period 1973 to 1982.
 1902–1982 – 4 files
- GCIP SPTW 3/25** **Correspondence with accounting and legal firms**
 1973–1988 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 3/26** **Correspondence with L M Harris and Co, accountants**
 1922–1977 – 4 files
- GCIP SPTW 3/27** **Correspondence with Miss Cowtan and Miss Lange
 [accountants]**
 1934–1982 – 5 files
- GCIP SPTW 3/28** **The Haweis Fund**
 Reports and correspondence.
 1918–1946 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 3/29** **National Advisory Centre on Careers for Women**
 Reports and correspondence.
 1973–1979 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 3/30** **Loan Defaulter - ...**
 Includes application for loan; letters of reference; correspondence with legal firms; reports from 'Enquiry Agent'; correspondence detailing efforts to recover debt, etc.
 1969–1978 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/31 Loan Defaulter - ...

Includes application for loan; grantee's index card; correspondence with legal firms; letter from [..] to Lord Gore Booth (copy), with reply; correspondence detailing efforts to recover debt, etc.

1967–1977 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/32 Abbey National Building Society Share Account Book

1960–1965 – 1 item

GCIP SPTW 3/33 Correspondence re Inland Revenue and Companies Act

1911–1986 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 3/34 Correspondence with de Zoete and Gorton

Correspondence with de Zoete and Gorton re investment of Society's funds

1961–1987 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 3/35 Appeals

Correspondence from the Valdar Publicity Agency with examples of appeal literature; letters to and from potential donors and contributors (individuals, companies and institutions); printed donation form; 'Saving Bright Clever Girls from Unemployment' - hand-drawn appeal pamphlet, containing typewritten draft of proposed letter to potential donors; 'Saving Educated Girls from Unemployment' - printed and revised version of same; correspondence relating to BBC Appeal; lists of donors, etc.

1925–1981 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 3/36 Appeals

Appeals: 1979 appeal

Potential donors for later applications; includes list of potential donors; correspondence with same; correspondence with donors; receipts; 'West London Committee for the Protection of Children - 59th annual report' (pr.); 'Why Charity must begin in Parliament', interview with Sir Anthony Burney, The Guardian, 13 December 1978, etc.

1978–1984 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/37 Appeals

Appeals: successful applications made in 1979

Correspondence and lists of donors.

1979 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/38 Appeals

Appeals: 1979 appeal

Refusals; includes correspondence and lists of refusals.

1979–1980 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/39 Valuation of securities

Valuation of securities; de Zoete and Bevan, stockbrokers

1982–1987 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 3/40 Former trainees (bundles, 1966-1984)

Loan applicants, completed and repaid. Details of applicants from their initial application for a loan (the Society's application form, often with a curriculum vitae), correspondence about courses followed and financial details, through to their final repayment of the loan. Covers applications made between 1966 and 1984.

1966 – 1986 – 3 files

GCIP SPTW 3/41 Former trainees (files, 1981-1991)

Loan applicants completed and repaid. Details of applicants from their initial application for a loan (the Society's application form, often with a curriculum vitae), correspondence about courses followed and financial details, through to their final repayment of the loan. Covers applications made between 1981 and 1991.

1981–1994 – 6 bundles

GCIP SPTW 3/42 Former trainees (index cards, 1914-1984)

Loan applicants completed and repaid. Index cards of applicants between 1914 and 1984 containing the following information about trainees: name, address, date of application, age at application, referees, guarantor, training and career, details of the loan given and repayment. The cards were almost certainly made from information held in personnel files, before they were destroyed.

1914–1984 – 9 bundles

GCIP SPTW 4 Society for Promoting the Training of Women: Subject Files

1859–1988

GCIP SPTW 4/1 Early History

Reports; notes on history of SPTW (including Jessie Boucherett's and some printed histories possibly with an appeal focus, such as that published in [1880], in centenary year 1959 and in 1966); notes on employments for women (by Madeline Greenwood, no date); correspondence including, amongst others, Jessie Boucherett and Jane Crow, 1862, Lord Shaftesbury, Mrs Constance Hoster [Hoster Secretarial Training], 1908, 1915 (re. The Educated Women's Emergency Fund) and 1939 (re. her death); agreements for guarantors 1925-1941.

1859–1966 – 2 bundles

GCIP SPTW 4/2 National Co-operative Peoples Bank Ltd

Correspondence; accounts; schedules; extracts from the minutes.

1899–1925 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/3 Central Bureau Loan Fund

Correspondence; notes on financial history; forms of legal agreement.

1947–1980 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/4 Freedom of Labour Defence

Minutes 1911-1915; correspondence (including Helen Blackburn, Jessie Boucherett); reports (including one on the factory acts 1874-1895 and A H Bright, 'Women and Industry in Liverpool' undated); newspaper cuttings; lectures.

1901-1915 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/5 Pfeiffer Fund

Extracts from minutes (1894); correspondence.

1932-1981 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/6 Pioneer Loan Training fund

Notes on history of fund; schedule; legal opinion; correspondence.

1945-1948 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/7 Gertrude King Scholarship

Notes [on Gertrude King]; correspondence.

1929-1968 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/8 Publicity

Correspondence; published articles; cuttings.

1943-1986 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/9 Pitman Intensive Business Course

Minutes (of sub-committee to discuss scheme); correspondence (including correspondence with universities, in particular, Oxford and Cambridge Women's Appointments Boards).

1931-1942 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/10 St James' Secretarial College / Spencer Munt Scholarship

Correspondence.

1938-1977 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/11 Miscellaneous organisations: correspondence

Including the following: British Federation of University Women, 1982; Sir John Cass Foundation, 1979-81; Charities Aid Foundation, 1983; China Clay Council, nd; Cripplegate Foundation, 1977; Gilchrist Educational Trust, 1985; Girls of the Realm Guild, 1984-85; Human Rights Committee, 1967; Sheila Kay Fund, 1982; University of London Appointments Board, 1967-75; National Council of Women, 1922-72; Sir Richard Stapley Trust, nd; Studley College, 1967; Thomas Wall Trust, 1969-75; Women's Farm and Garden Association, 1939-88; World University Service, 1966.

1922-1981 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/12 Speeches at annual meetings; annual meetings general papers

Notes for chairman's speech at annual meeting (latterly very brief notes for the chair on procedure at AGM), 1935-70; notes for Treasurer's report at annual meeting, 1935-67; correspondence re annual meeting and constitution 1940-41; correspondence with speakers at the annual meeting (usually covers subject of speech), 1951-85.

1935-1985 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/13 Subscribers and donors: correspondence

2 files: O-R; S-Z. Includes individuals and institutions, some with long periods of contributions (great efforts were taken to trace lapsed subscribers). The following correspondents are included: Robinson, 1970; Oxford University Women's Appointments Committee, 1949-58; Rees Thomas, 1940-62; R Darwin (becomes Lady Reading), 1934-41; Lady (H) Runciman, 1938; Enid Roper Spyers; Federation of Soroptomist Clubs, 1957; E S Spring Rice, 1936-38; Rough, 1936; Mrs Meyer Sassoon, 1934; Hilda Shawe, 1949-53; Leeston Smith,

1934; Mary South, 1940-53; Philippa Strachey, 1940-63; Margaret Vince, 1943-51; Gladys Wain, 1935-37; Millicent Wainwright, 1934-42; A H Watson, 1947; Wickham, 1943; Gladys Woolcombe, 1938.

1930-1970 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/14 Vice-Presidents: correspondence

Correspondence with Vice-Presidents concerning the post, their subscriptions etc. Including the following correspondents: Marjorie V Dawkins (Lady), 1935-51; E Farmer, 1934; Lady Runciman; Molly Booth, 1934-51; Josephine Chance, 1934; Doris Tomlinson, 1946; Cynthia Tucker, 1943-68; Mary Ogilvie, 1939-63.

1934-1968 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/15 Hewlett and Co, solicitors: correspondence

1934-1962 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/16 Legacies: correspondence

Includes a copy of Jessie Boucherett's will (1905) and photograph. Also includes list of legacies received and those promised.

1902-1981 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/17 Correspondence with [Executive] Committee members

Includes list of committee members.

1955-1986 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/18 Correspondence with subscribers

1950-1987 – 2 files

GCIP SPTW 4/19 Publications advertising SPTW

Correspondence, notices etc., information about publicity, 1977 and undated and an example of a notice to be published, 1966.

1926-1987 – 1 file

GCIP SPTW 4/20 Radcliffe and Co, solicitors: correspondence

Correspondence about the amalgamation of loan funds, including correspondence with the Charity Commission and with Mr Chandler.

1981-1987 – 1 file

- GCIP SPTW 4/21 Women's Employment Federation / National Advisory
Centre on Careers for Women**
- Correspondence, 1947-86; annual reports and some minutes, 1955-86; bulletins,
1980-87.
- 1947-1987 – 3 files
- GCIP SPTW 4/22 Miscellaneous correspondence re Mr Chandler, Chase
Charity, Charity Commission**
- Miscellaneous correspondence re Mr Chandler, investment and financial
adviser, 1984-86; Chase Charity, 1984-87; the Charity Commission (mostly
photocopies) 1984-87.
- 1984-1987 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 4/23 Professional Classes Aid Council: correspondence**
- 1932-1987 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW 4/24 Agendas and details of applicants**
- Agendas for meetings of 'the Committee' with details of applicants for training
grants attached.
- 1967-1987 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW Microfilming of Annual Reports**
- Correspondence with University Microfilms about microfilming and
xerographic copies.
- 1960-1966 – 1 file
- GCIP SPTW Office equipment and printing**
- Correspondence about the maintenance of the typewriter, other office equipment
and printing work.
- 1929-1987 – 1 file

APPENDIX 2

Some Notable Events in SPEW/SPTW's History

- 1859 SPEW founded
- 1860 Registry for Employment taken over from *EWJ*
- 1860 First law copying class for women established by SPEW at 12 Portugal Street (later supported Maria Rye's Law Copying agency)
- 1860 First book-keeping classes for women established
- 1860 Printing business to employ only women underwritten by SPEW: Emily Faithfull appointed to manage it
- 1860 First 'middle-class commercial school' for girls opened by Jessie Boucherett
- 1861 SPEW's first attempts to get women trained as hairdressers
- 1863 SPEW arrange for six women to be employed as railroad telegraph clerks
- 1865 SPEW sell a pamphlet at 1d. entitled 'Medicine as a career for women' (but it was 1899 before the first medical student was helped with a loan from the Society)
- 1873 SPEW start first shorthand class for women
- 1875 SPEW asks in a Report for "equal pay for equal work"
- 1876 First plan tracing office to employ women
- 1881 First demand for telephone operators. Between 30-40 employed, of whom 22 were introduced by SPEW
- 1884 First typewriting agency underwritten by SPEW. Rush of learners
- 1890 Profession of typist becoming overcrowded
- 1890 Caroline Ashurst Biggs Memorial Fund established (she was a member of SPEW Committee and pioneer suffragist). Affiliated to SPEW after 1899
- 1892 SPEW involved in appealing to Home Secretary to appoint women as factory inspectors
- 1894 Pfeiffer Student Fund established in memory of Madame Ida Pfeiffer
- 1899 *[From this time onwards, SPEW gradually switched its support from assisting applicants for vocational training to those embarking on professional training]*
- 1899 Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund established by Mrs Hoster
- 1902 Mrs Haweis Memorial Fund (Mary Elizabeth Haweis: author; daughter of Thomas Joy, fashionable painter; wife of Rev. Dr. Hugh Reginald Haweis)
- 1904 Helen Blackburn Memorial Fund established (pioneer suffragist; editor of EWR; member of SPEW Committee)
- 1908 Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund established by Mrs Constance Hoster (amalgamated with SPEW in 1913)
- 1910 Louisa, Lady Goldsmid Fund (Sir Francis and Lady Goldsmid members of SPEW Committee)
- 1913 Susan Elizabeth Fortescue Memorial Fund (Lady Susan had been SPEW's Hon. Treasurer for some years – Fund later joined to EWWLTF)
- 1915 Clara Evelyn Mordan Memorial Fund (member of SPEW committee)
- 1920 November 1920 Annual Report mentions that they will be moving to 251 Brompton Road because the rent had been raised
- 1929 Gertrude King Memorial Loan Fund (scholarship to assist a trainee secretary at Mrs Hoster's College; Fund later amalgamated with SEF and EWWLTF)
- 1933 Mrs Spencer-Munt Memorial Scholarship Fund (founder of St. James's Secretarial College; set up in her memory to enable two girls (non-graduates) each year to train as secretaries at St. James's; Fund amalgamated with SPTW 1938)
- 1941 Legacy from Mrs Hoster to be used by SPTW to assist girls wishing to train as secretaries
- 1941 SPTW moved out of 251 Brompton Road because it suffered bomb damage (6.12.1941)

APPENDIX 2a
(extracts from GCIP/SPTW 4/1 Early History)

Occupations and trades into which women were placed 1859-1909 via SPEW's initiatives or assistance

art needlework	lace cleaning and mending	shorthand writing
artificial flower-making	lantern slide colouring	stationery work
book-binding	laundry management	surgical appliance-making
book-keeping	law writing	teaching:
children's nursing	lecturing	kindergarten
china painting	librarianship	elementary
chromolithography	linotype printing	secondary
church embroidery	lithography	domestic economy
decorative art	massage	science
dentistry	maternity nursing	music
designing eg textiles	medicine	physical exercises
dispensing	midwifery	
dressmaking	millinery	telegraphy
fashion drawing	monotype printing	telephonist
floral decoration	mural mosaic work	typewriting
gardening	pattern card-making	upholstery
gilding	photography	vellum sewing
glass painting	plan tracing	watch engraving
gold-beater's skin making	printing	weaving
hairdressing	proof reading	wig-making
health visiting	relief stamping	wood carving
hospital nursing	remedial exercises	wood engraving
illustrating	saleswomen	
indexing	sanitary inspectors	
jewel case-making	secretaries	

APPENDIX 3

THE FOUNDER OF SPEW – Correspondence on the Subject between Committee Member Mrs Locke King and Jane Crowe, Secretary

(GCIP/SPTW 4/1 Early History File)

38 Dover Street
22d May 1862

My dear Miss Crowe

The extract from the Minutes of the Council is so at variance with a letter which Miss Craig inserted in the Times on the 17th of November 1859 that it throws quite a new light in the subject. I ought rather to call it a darkness. It accounts to me for an abrupt summons to a Committee meeting which Miss Faithfull sent me, which I never could see the reason of, & to which I was not able from ill health to respond & which a subsequent reply of Miss Faithfull's to enquiries I sent by letter did not explain or even enter into.

The Extract you have sent makes no mention of it's [sic] having then been proposed, seconded & carried that a Committee of which the names all given should be formed to consider and report to the Council on the best means which the Association could adopt to assist the movement for increasing the industrial employment of women & that she was the Secretary of the Committee – There appears to me to have been a series of cross-purposes or rather rival purposes going on from the beginning. The papers that I have prove the distinct existence of our Society before it became affiliated to the Social Science Association in December 1859 – which is just what Miss Boucherett said & also I think Miss Procter on Tuesday last.

I will shew you the letter when we meet – & meantime return you the Extract.

Believe me,
Your's [sic] very truly
Louisa E King

APPENDIX 3a**Jane Crowe's reply to Mrs Locke King**

(GCIP/SPTW 4/1 Early History File)

Crowe
May 24th 1862

Dear Mrs King

I do not think anyone would dispute the distinct existence of Miss Boucherett's Society previous to the affiliation – The extract I sent you from the Council minutes has nothing to do with the Committee alluded to in Miss Craig's letter in the Times of Nov. 17th. She there spoke of a Committee appointed by the Council, & the extract I sent you refers to the affiliation of our Society to the Association which took place a month later. Perhaps it will make it clearer if I remind you that Miss Boucherett founded our Society in the summer of 1859. Two months later the Social Science Association held its annual meeting at Bradford, & Miss Parkes's paper on the Industrial Condition of Women called the attention of the Council to the subject. The Committee Miss Craig announced in her letter to the Times was appointed to consider the question. Miss Boucherett, Miss Parkes, Miss Procter & Miss Faithfull (at the time members of our Committee & Secretary to our Society) with Lord Shaftesbury, Mr Horace Mann & several others, formed this Committee to consider & report to the Council on the best means the Association could adopt to assist the movement for promoting the industrial employment of women. Miss Boucherett then became anxious to affiliate her Society to the S.S.A. The subject we brought before the Council on the 8th December met with opposition & was deferred till the next meeting. It was carried Dec. 22nd - & then the members of the Council's Committee proposed that they should close their Committee, as the Society's Committee would now do all that was necessary.

Miss Craig would no doubt give any farther information ~~which might be required~~, about the Council's Committee, but we are not entitled to ask for those minutes, any more than for the minutes relating to the Workhouse Visiting Society - & as they relate to a distinct thing they would not assist in clearing up our relations with the Council. But I am certain Miss Craig will be very glad to show you them on Tuesday, if you wish it.

Believe me, dear Mrs King
Yours very truly
Jane Crowe

APPENDIX 3b

First page of Boucherett's letter to SPEW Chairman (full transcript pages iv-vi)

Willingham ~~Boucherett~~
 June 25th 1869

To the Chairman of the Committee.

My dear Sir or Madam

I am sorry to trouble the Committee with a personal affair, but can make the necessity of so doing. Ed Boucherett in his speech at the S. S. Congress said that "by the exertions of Miss Bessie Parker and Miss Emily Faithful a society in connexion with the National Ass'n was formed for promoting the Industrial Employment of women, which was reported at the subsequent congress held at Bradford". I enclose the passage from the Times. This statement placed me in an awkward position, because having hitherto believed that the Society was founded by Miss Procter and myself, I have sometimes said so, and have frequently allowed others to make the assertion in my presence uncontradicted. It may therefore be thought that I have

APPENDIX 3b

The Subject of the Identity of SPEW's Founder

Boucherett's letters to (1) SPEW Chairman and (2) to Bessie Parkes* (Editor of *EWJ*)

(GCIP/SPTW 4/1 Early History File)

Willingham. June 25 1862

To the Chairman of the Committee

My dear Sir or Madam

I am sorry to trouble the Committee with a personal affair, but am under the necessity of so doing.

Ld Brougham in his speech at the SS Congress said that "by the exertions of Miss Bessie Parkes and Miss Emily Faithfull a society in connexion with the National Association was formed for promoting the Industrial Employment of Women, which was reported at the subsequent congress held at Bradford". I enclose the passage from the Times.

This statement places me in an awkward position, because having hitherto believed that the Society was founded by Miss Procter and myself, I have sometimes said so, and have frequently allowed others to make the assertion in my presence uncontradicted. It may therefore be thought that I have put forward unfounded contentions, or at least have allowed others to do so for me.

It is for the Committee to decide whether Ld Brougham's statement is true or not. I enclose papers which I think prove it not to be true.

1st The original Prospectus, written by me, in which Miss Procter and I appear as Hon. Secs.

2nd Letters from Mr Hastings and Miss Craig asking me to name the chairman of the side meeting for the employment of women at Bradford, which request showed I was then considered the chief mover in the matter.

3rd The Report read and adopted (sic) at the General Meeting of Subscribers held Feb 17th/60 to confirm our connexion with the Social Science. In this a history of the Society is given which I must beg the Committee to read.

It is here distinctly stated that our affiliation and change of rules "merely affect the Management of the Society and do not in any way affect the principles and objects for which the Society was formed". The Society is therefore the same which was originally formed.

I may observe also that if the Society had been broken up and a new one formed the subscribers money must have been returned which was certainly neither done or (sic) proposed.

Mr Hastings' motion "that the thanks of the meeting be given to Ld Brougham and the other ladies and gentlemen who helped to form this Society" shows that he considered the Society to be the same which Ld Brougham assisted to form.

I dwell on these points because I have been told that the old Society was then abolished and a new one formed of which the National Association was the founder.

4th I enclose the report of the Society at the end of the first year in which it is stated that the Society was formed in July 59.

Lastly I enclose the list of subscribers made before we joined the Science Society, lest it should be said our Society was so insignificant before it joined, as not to be worthy to be considered as existing.

I shall now mention certain matters of fact which some of the members can confirm. When the idea of forming this Society first presented itself to me, I requested Miss Parkes to join me, which she declined to do on the ground that it was a rash enterprize and that on account of the Journal she did not wish her name to be connected with an undertaking which might fail; but she very kindly gave me an opportunity of canvassing the ladies who attended her reading room on which occasion Miss Procter joined me. Miss Crowe will remember that evening. Miss Parkes however consented to join also a few weeks later when the prospect of success appeared brighter and Miss Faithfull came also at about the same time.

Miss Craig will remember that in November after the Bradford meeting Miss Procter and myself as Hon Secs and representatives of the Society called on Mr Hastings at Waterloo Place and requested him to take steps to place the Society in connexion with the Social Science.

I will now relate what I cannot prove viz - that from the end of August 59, when the Prospectus was first distributed, to the beginning of November, every letter was forwarded to me from the office to be answered, the Secretary proving incompetent. The letters of enquiry were numerous and I was often writing all day, but the result was that when the Committee met in November they found £170 in the bank. I confess I think it hard to be told the Society was founded by the exertions of Miss Parkes and Miss Faithfull.

If the Committee are satisfied that Ld Brougham's statement is an error, as I think they can hardly fail to do, I shall be much obliged to them to pass a resolution recognising the facts of the case and to direct Miss Crowe to send a copy of the resolution to the Hon Sec of the Social Science Association together with a letter calling his attention to the error in Ld Brougham's speech and requesting him to endeavour to prevent a repetition of similar mistakes concerning the Society from being made at future S.S. Congresses. If our President is not present I should wish him to receive a copy of the resolution and of the letter to Mr Hastings, and I should be glad of (?two) copies of the resolution and letter for myself.

Perhaps the Committee would not object to write a letter to Ld Brougham himself, explaining the facts and enclosing one of the Reports for Feb/60. I do not however make this a request, as the Committee might not consider it advisable (sic), but I suggest it because a relation of mine told him the truth and was evidently not believed.

Any contradiction of Ld Brougham's statement in the newspapers would be uncourteous towards him, and I may say disagreeable to me so the general public must continue to give Miss Parkes and Miss Faithfull the credit of being our founders and I am contented it should be so, provided the workers and friends of the cause know the truth.

I am far from wishing to disparage these ladies. Four of our branch Societies have been started by them. The Victoria Press is a most successful effort of women's work, and the English Women's Journal has been, and is, extremely useful.

Since the first few months they have done much more for the cause than I have, and I should be obliged to the Committee to recognise their important services in any resolution they may pass.

I am also bound to say that I am not aware that either of them have ever put forward any claim to be founders.

Two years ago when Ld Brougham made the same mistatement with regard to Miss Parkes, I spoke to her on the subject and she showed me the printed copy of an address made by her at Glasgow in which she had

stated that the Society was first started by me, to prove that the error had not arisen from anything said by her and I feel certain it has not.

Finally I have to request the members of the Committee to justify me if they should ever hear me blamed for putting forward unfounded claims, by relating the real circumstances. I hardly know if I should even now have defended my claim, if I had not felt it necessary to support my character for veracity.

I have given notice to Miss Parkes, Miss Faithfull and Mr Hastings, that I am going to bring this question before the Committee in case they should wish to say any thing.

I will add that this statement of Ld Brougham's has not at all changed my opinion with regard to the advantage of remaining in connexion with the Social Science which has given us so much assistance, but I hope the Committee will be very careful, if the rules are revised, not to do anything which shall give the Council any additional (sic) power over us. Indeed unless the Committee is a very large one, I would strongly advise them to make no change, except appointing a delegate, lest they should do this unawares.

Yrs sincerely
(Boucherett)

APPENDIX 3c

First page of Boucherett's letter to Bessie Parkes (full transcript p.viii)

Boucherett
Jan. 29

Dear Bessie,

May I write to the Times about J. B. Whigham's misstatement. It is a mistake to continue to write as if the word but were in a discreditable position. I mention my letter to the Committee that I signed they would not put any conditions in the Standard. The E. W. is a different thing and I should be proud

obliged to you to put in a note as you propose.

It has been a most disagreeable affair to me, as I now occupy the position of an instructor to wards all who do not know the real truth.

It is not a pleasant affair in your view, as many educated people will believe you give false information to J. B. Whigham. We shall both suffer in our characters and the cause through it. Then J. B. made the mistake two years ago. Mr. Hastings

APPENDIX 3c

Transcript of Boucherett's Letter to Parkes

Willingham
June 29th

Dear Bessie

Pray don't write to the Times about Ld Brougham's mistatement. It would not be courteous to him and it would put me in a disagreeable position. I said in my letter to the Committee that I begged they would not put my contradiction in the newspapers.

The E.W.J. is a diferent (sic) thing and I should be much obliged to you to put in a note as you propose.

It has been a most disagreeable affair to me, as I now occupy the position of an impostor towards all who do not know the real truth.

It is not a pleasant affair for you either as many ill natured people who know the truth about me will believe you gave false information to Ld Brougham.

We shall both suffer in our characters and the cause through us. When Ld B made the mistake two years ago Mr Hastings or Miss Craig ought to have set him right and here my dear Bessie you were wrong, you ought to have ascertained if they had done so and if they had not to have written privately to Ld Brougham yourself and explained the matter. You took it as a matter of course that they had done so, but this was a mistake.

Why Mr Hastings should have been unwilling to do me justice I cannot imagine, it is hardly possible that I should have given him personal offence, but I suppose he is a great radical and does not like to acknowledge that the member of a Tory family should have started this thing.

I am sure you never meant to claim any credit that was not your due, but by trusting too much to others you have allowed them to do it most effectually.

I don't mean that Mr Hastings gave false information to Ld Brougham but he took no pains to give him true, tho' he knew he was under a false impression. Miss Craig of course is under his orders and I do not blame her at all.

Yrs affily.
Jessie Boucherett

* Parkes had resigned from SPEW's Committee in May 1862

APPENDIX 4

SPEW's Minutes - extracts illustrating Gertrude Jane King's handwriting and style

The Minute Books measure 9½ by 14½ inches, and King's handwriting stretches from edge to edge of the pages so these brief samples have been reduced in size. Her writing became more legible and the Minutes increased in length as time passed: the second example was written 24 years after the first.

At a meeting of the General Committee held on Monday
May 19th 1873

- Present
- Thomas More Esq in the chair
 - Sir Francis Goldsmith
 - Hon Mrs Locke King
 - Hon Mrs Ponsordby
 - Mrs Lankester
 - Mrs F. Harrison
 - Mrs Burbury
 - Hon G. Grosvenor
 - Hon W. Stanley
 - Miss J. Boucherett
 - Miss Crowe
 - Miss Davies
 - Miss Bruce
- Gertrude J. King
Secy

The minutes of the previous meeting were read and confirmed.

Miss J. Boucherett stated that a Bill, prepared and brought in by Sir John Lubbock, Mr Thomas Styer, Mr Morley and Mr McDonald, to provide for Regulating the Hours of Labour of Children, young persons, and women in Shops for the Sale of Goods, and otherwise to extend and amend the Workshop Act is now before the House, the second reading of which had been fixed for the 20th inst, but was now postponed till after Whit-Sunday; that the tendency of this bill, if passed, would be greatly to increase the difficulties in the way of procuring employment for women, as book-keepers, saleswomen, &c. since all shops in which women were employed, with the exception of shops licensed for the sale of intoxicating liquors, or for articles of food sold for consumption on the premises or Bake-Houses, would be compelled to close at two o'clock on one day of the week, and at nine in the evening of every

At a meeting of the Managing Committee held on Friday
October 22nd 1897.

Present:

Honble. Victoria Grosvenor, in the Chair

Miss Crowe

Mrs. Gerard Ford.

Miss Gordon.

Gertrude J. King, Secy

The Minutes of the previous Meeting were read and confirmed
Read a letter from Miss McCroben expressing her thanks
to the Committee for permission to use the Society's office as the
required office of the Assistant Mistresses Association, which
was about to be incorporated without any additional charge
for one year, as the Association already pays £6 a year for
the Library.

Read a letter from Mrs. Allusion thanking the Committee
for the loan of £2 which had been granted to her.

At the last Meeting of the General Committee Mr Locke
had applied for a loan to enable him to place his daughter
aged 15½ at the Royal Academy of Music. The General
Committee had desired that further inquiries should be
made and if the girl has real talent for music - had
promised that a loan to the amount of £8 to £10 should
be granted. The Secretary said she had seen Mr Locke and
his daughter, and had pointed out to them the difficulty of
making a living by music which, as a profession, is one
of the most over-crowded. Mr Locke said that Mr Westlake,
one of the Examiners at the Academy had tested his daughter's
powers and had strongly advised him to make an effort
to place her at the Academy believing that at the end of a
year she would in all probability gain a Scholarship.
The fees at the Academy are £5- for the Entrance Examination
and £11-11/- per term, making altogether £39-13/- for the first
year. The girl herself is most anxious to get the help.

APPENDIX 5

Memorial and Scholarship Funds Administered by SPEW/SPTW

The following women or organisations who had connections with the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women were amongst those commemorated by having Memorial Funds set up in their names. At first, the funds were administered separately, but most were eventually amalgamated into the General Loan Training Fund.

<u>Set up in</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Amount starting the fund</u>
1890	Caroline Ashurst Biggs	£171 7s 6d
1894	Mme Ida Pfeiffer	(£50 annual interest on invested £2000)
1902	Mrs Haweis	£166 8s 0d
1904	Helen Blackburn	£250 0s 0d (more later)
1910	Louisa, Lady Goldsmid	£200 0s 0d
1913	EWLTF	£192 15s 0d
1913	Lady Susan Elizabeth Fortescue	£200 0s 0d
1913	EWLTF	£233 17s 11d
1915	Clara Evelyn Mordan	£100 0s 0d
1929	Gertrude King	£103 12s 0d
1938	Mrs Spencer Munt Scholarship	[free place for non-graduate student]

The Funds from the Pioneer Loan Training Fund (1901) and the Central Bureau Fund (1942) were also amalgamated into SPTW's Loan Training Funds in 1986. The Mrs Spencer Munt Scholarship was discontinued in 1968.

APPENDIX 6

Mrs Eliza Mary Haweis 1848-1898

[information from SPEW archives and from Haweis biography *Arbiter of Elegance* (Howe 1967)]

Elizabeth Mary Joy was the daughter of the fashionable painter, Thomas Joy. She herself became well-known as an interior decorator, book illustrator and flower arranger. Her 'masterpiece' was the decoration of Rossetti's House in Chelsea. She was married at the age of nineteen to Hugh Reginald Haweis, who was a well-known – and very popular – curate and preacher in London (St. James's Church, Marylebone) from the 1860s until the end of the century. Behind his public persona, however, lay an egotist whose womanising and extravagance with the family's (mainly his wife's) money was only exposed to Eliza Mary towards the end of her own life. As a result, she attempted to secure what little remained of her fortune for her youngest son, Stephen, who was – unfortunately as it turned out – still a minor.

As the family finances were in a particularly disastrous state at the time of Eliza's death, one of her relatives arranged that £1,000 should be paid into her estate, specifically for the use of her son Stephen. In order to get his hands on this money, Hugh Reginald set up a memorial fund in his wife's name, ostensibly to assist 'Poor Working Girls', and arranged that Stephen (a minor at the time) would be the chairman of its organising committee. 'H.R.' then transferred Stephen's £1,000 into this fund, to start it off. After some additional contributions had been made, H.R. eventually arranged for his daughter Hugolin (who had been estranged from her mother but was under her father's protection) to be the recipient of the £1,000 as 'she is the only poor working girl' known to her father (Howe 1967:305). By the time of H.R.'s death early in 1901, only £166 8s. 0d. remained in the fund, with no record amongst the papers in SPEW's archive of that £1,000 ever having been deposited or spent.

The provisional committee set up to administer the fund with Eliza's friend Mrs Wynford Philipps as Hon. Treasurer, and Stephen Haweis as the family's representative, was disbanded, and after an abortive attempt to enlist more subscribers the Fund was transferred to SPEW in July 1902, under the management of two members of the Women's (employment) Institute, two members of the Central Employment Bureau, and two members of the Committee of SPEW – to be used by the three Societies only, and any loans from the Fund to be limited to £20.

Grantees from the Fund trained for art work, cookery, nursing, medicine, printing, health visiting, teaching, pharmacy, secretarial work, domestic economy teaching, book-keeping, civil service clerkship etc.

The original £166 8s. 0d. from the Mrs Haweis Memorial Fund for Working Girls has continued to be a part of SPEW's financing of loans ever since, having been administered solely by the Society after the Women's (employment) Institute and the Central Bureau folded in the 1920s.

APPENDIX 7

Letter which accompanied the 'pilot' questionnaire sent to a potential third cohort of women. These women were contacted via pupils following a secretarial course at a large comprehensive school. Although that age-group was not subsequently represented in my thesis, contacts made through this letter included some older women whose employment histories do form part of the study (see Table 2.2).

Dear

Re: Research into "A Century of Women's Employment in Clerical Occupations"

Thank you for volunteering to answer my questionnaire about work in clerical occupations. Please be assured that any information you disclose to me will remain entirely confidential. Although I need to include your name on the form, any details from your reply which might later be referred to in my study will be completely anonymous. Please feel free to omit answers to any of the questions which are irrelevant to your circumstances, or to which you object. You will see that I have not necessarily left enough space for some answers, so feel free to write on the reverse or a separate sheet. I have enclosed a stamped addressed envelope for your reply.

The eventual success of my research will depend, to a great extent, on my ability to gather additional details about 'life in offices', which I hope will be possible during follow-up discussions with some of the women who have completed this questionnaire. I would be very pleased to hear from you if you would agree to be one of these interviewees. Perhaps you would indicate on the questionnaire if you are willing to be contacted regarding an interview, and in that case please include your telephone number. If you prefer email, you are welcome to use the above e-address.

One last request: I am very keen to contact ladies in much older age groups, who had at some stage worked in offices. If you know of anyone born before, say, 1920 who would be willing to be interviewed, please put her in touch with me.

Hoping to hear from you shortly, I am
Yours sincerely

Anne Bridger

APPENDIX 7a

QUESTIONNAIRE – CLERICAL WORK

(This was based on a piloted version, and accompanied the letter in Appendix 7)

Name:

Date of Birth or Age:

Town of Birth:

1. Secondary Education: (type of school; size of school; how long there; optional courses chosen; qualifications obtained at end of statutory schooling)

2. Post -15 or 16 Training or Education: (where, when; qualifications obtained; reason for doing it)

3. What kind of encouragement or support did you receive from your family about your choice of work/training?

4. First job on leaving school/college: (say how you got the job. Had anyone else in your family done or is doing similar work?)

5. Details about this job: eg how obtained; how long did you stay in this job? Salary details? Hours of work? Promotion prospects? Dress codes? Office hierarchy? Male/female bosses?

6. Why did you leave? If for another job, please give details.

7. Subsequent career. If currently working, give brief details of how your choice of this job was made:

8. If marriage/children interrupted working life, give brief details: (eg childcare arrangements; husband's job meant moving etc)

9. Any additional comments about: conditions at work; importance or otherwise of colleagues/atmosphere/hours of work/physical conditions at work/proximity to easy travel arrangements etc. Any anecdotes about school or working life?

APPENDIX 7b

Notes made in October 2001 as part of my research diary, relating to Appendix 7a - Questionnaire

WHAT I HOPED TO ACHIEVE BY ASKING THESE QUESTIONS:

1. Secondary Education: (type of school; size of school; how long there; optional courses chosen; qualifications obtained at end of statutory schooling)

To ascertain whether they stayed at school beyond the statutory leaving age (which would also interact with the qualifications and give clues as to their intelligence levels). This would also assist in providing information about the socio-economic situation of the family of origin, since staying on beyond the statutory age was often not an option if family incomes were low. There are also issues about parents' attitudes to their daughters' compared, for instance, to their sons', education.

2. Post -15 or 16 Training or Education: (where, when; qualifications obtained; reason for doing it)

This question also offers some indication of parental income brackets, as well as attitudes towards their daughters' potential career destinations.

3. What kind of encouragement or support did you receive from your family about your choice of work/training?

This more direct question offers opportunities for expansion on the factual answers required in 1 & 2. It also appears to offer an opportunity to 'refuse' an answer if it had been felt to be intrusive.

4. First job on leaving school/college: (say how you got the job. Had anyone else in your family done or is doing similar work?)

The ways in which jobs were obtained is as much of interest as the actual job taken. There have been changes in the ways job vacancies are filled – prior to mid-century children frequently went to work where a family member was already employed: recommendations pre-empted advertisements for vacancies. After the mid-20C job choices increased, and employers started to compete for workers.

5. Details about this job: eg how obtained; how long did you stay in this job? Salary details? Hours of work? Promotion prospects? Dress codes? Office hierarchy? Male/female bosses?

Facts relating to salaries/hours etc allow direct comparison with the other cohorts. The question offers opportunities to relate anecdotes about office relationships and conventions

6. Why did you leave? If for another job, please give details.

Progression issues... How these earliest work experiences led to later activities; and for the older women, the question would indicate whether social conventions such as married women not working, or mothers of young children not working, were operating at the time

7. Subsequent career. If currently working, give brief details of how your choice of this job was made:

Indications of 'potential': ie were school-leaving qualifications (or lack of) supplemented by later study, either through job-related qualifications or opportunities to use talents. To what extent do the women's individual experiences indicate personal drive or ambition, or merely opportunism?

8. If marriage/children interrupted working life, give brief details: (eg childcare arrangements; husband's job meant moving etc)

Some clues to this aspect would have been gleaned from question 6; but for the youngest cohort, issues regarding the balance of home and career are an important aspect of the research.

9. Any additional comments about: conditions at work; importance or otherwise of colleagues/atmosphere/hours of work/physical conditions at work/proximity to easy travel arrangements etc. Any anecdotes about school or working life?

It is always sensible to offer an open-ended question. Having taken the trouble to respond to the purely factual questions, it is quite common for people to be willing to continue to write (or talk) about themselves; and the earlier questions will quite probably have triggered half-forgotten aspects of their lives which they are quite happy to revisit. Written questionnaires make this less rewarding for the researcher, as writing at length is more time-consuming than talking and requires much more effort. For this reason, the respondents were all asked to indicate whether they would be willing to be interviewed as a follow-up.

APPENDIX 8

Introductory letter sent to potential informants, selected from database of old girls from the grammar school I had once attended

21 July 2001

Dear

re: ... Old Girls' Contacts

I hope you will forgive the intrusion of a letter from a stranger, albeit a fellow KOGA member. Although semi-retired now, I am engaged in research leading to a PhD in social history, my working title being 'A Century of Women's Employment in Clerical Occupations'. As part of my research project, I am transcribing original archive material housed at Girton College, Cambridge, which details the earliest days of women's employment in offices, and the enquiries which this letter covers will enable me to draw comparisons between the experiences of Victorian women, and those of a later generation.

Naturally I have no idea which occupations most old scholars pursued after they left ... School, so I am writing to a number of those residing in the Reading area who left school before the end of the Second World War, in the hopes that at least some will have been engaged in clerical or secretarial employment (of any kind, anywhere) during their working lives.

If you are one such person, would you be prepared to answer my questions? This could be either in the form of a conversation (which I would record for later transcription) or through a written questionnaire, if you prefer. I am enclosing a self-addressed envelope for your response, with a reply slip indicating your willingness or otherwise to be contacted, if indeed you have experience of office work. I have left the stamp loose in order that you might make use of it if you are not replying to me.

With many thanks in anticipation of your help, I am
Yours sincerely

Anne Bridger (Mrs)

Name Tel. No.

Having had experience of office employment in the past, I am willing to answer some questions. I would prefer to do so

(a) via a written questionnaire*

(b) during an interview*

*please delete as appropriate

APPENDIX 8a

Covering letter accompanying the questionnaire to those KOGA informants who preferred not to be interviewed

Dear

Thank you very much indeed for responding to my letter. I am now enclosing a list of 'prompt questions' and look forward to hearing from you again in due course.

I have numbered the questions, rather than leave 'guess spaces', and will then be able to match up the answers if you would kindly indicate the appropriate number against your responses. Please do include any additional information as it occurs to you – the questions are meant only as 'prompts', as would have been used if we had been meeting for a conversation.

Please do not feel pressured to respond instantly: if you prefer to take weeks to reply, rather than days, this would still fit in with my research schedule (and of course I'll be taking a few days' holiday during August).

I am again enclosing a stamped, self-addressed envelope and look forward to reading about your school and working-life experiences.

Many thanks,
Yours sincerely

APPENDIX 8b

Questionnaire sent to those informants from KOGA who agreed to take part in the survey

Please feel free to omit any questions you feel are too intrusive; similarly please include any additional information as it occurs to you, even if not specifically addressed by a question.

1. Name and date of birth
2. Dates of attendance at Kendrick School, and relevant age when starting/leaving
3. Were you there as a result of taking a scholarship examination? If so, which school had you attended when sitting for the scholarship? Did you previously know any other girls in your year/form?
4. Were you the first/only girl in the family to attend Kendrick?
5. What were the reactions of family/friends etc to your attending Kendrick? eg pleased; proud; sceptical; concerned about uniforms or the 'requirement' to stay to age 16-17 etc
6. Were you happy there? What were some of the 'highs' or 'lows' you recall? eg discipline; lessons; friendships; relationships with teachers/headmistress; sporting life etc
7. Did you sit for/pass/fail any school-leaving examinations (eg Matric; Higher SC etc)?
8. When you were there, was the school offering the opportunity to learn shorthand and/or typewriting (ie in the lower sixth)? If you studied these subjects please give details about the teaching, the number of periods per week allocated to them, the attitude of the teachers to their inclusion on the timetable, your own response to learning such skills etc
9. If you did not learn office skills at school, did you subsequently attend any training eg at a private secretarial college? If so, please say where/for how long/qualifications achieved
10. What had prompted you to seek an office career? Was this a conscious decision or more of a 'drifting-into' situation? Were you encouraged by anyone in the family to do this? Do you recall anyone at school offering 'careers' advice, or even talking to you about staying on at school/going to college/taking employment? What were the school's expectations of where most girls would 'end up'?
11. Please now tell me about your first job: how you obtained it; what your duties were; hours of work; what you were paid; whether you liked it and if so why; how long you stayed there and why you left. If this was office work, what kind of 'equipment' was available at the time eg typewriters, adding machines etc?
12. Information about your subsequent working life:
type of work
promotion opportunities taken/rejected
interruptions due to war/family commitments/personal preferences
conditions at work; colleagues (eg if working during the war was the type of work done by young women affected by the absence of men of call-up age?). Were bosses male or female?
13. Since leaving school, have you obtained any additional qualifications? eg specifically related to working life, or for any other purpose (NB And if you became a Civil Servant, please mention any entry examinations). What kind of positions of responsibility did you hold during any of your jobs?
14. Anything else at all that you would like to mention?
15. Any anecdotes about Miss Prebble?

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING THE TIME AND TROUBLE TO RESPOND. *Anne Bridger*

APPENDIX 9

Transcription of Illustration 2.1 – Cross-writing (correspondence regarding Freedom of Labour Defence from Boucherett to Antoinette Mackenzie)

Letter 1. [*handwritten address*]

Willingham
Market Rasen

Jan 25

My dear Miss Mackenzie

About the proposal for a new member of the Executive Committee. Do you think Mrs Greenwood or Mrs Moberley Bell would make a good member? If not I think our best plan would be to ask Lady F. Balfour if she knows of anyone who would make a good member. We could then elect her on the General Committee and afterwards promote her to the executive.

I have heard that the lawyer is not bound to pay my legacy for a year from the 1st Dece. I'm not sure if this is true but I will endeavour to ascertain if it is.

It would be most inconvenient and if so we must be economical this year as the expense will come upon me without any funds.

Miss Meynell always subscribed and helped and now she is gone and the legacy can't be paid for a year.

I hope that Mrs Mackenzie won't mind our using her drawing room for a year (if that prove true)

Miss Torrans we must engage and I hope you won't mind her coming into yr drawing room every afternoon for some hours. I will pay this Bales Bill and Miss Torrans must be paid or she would starve but for the rest we must simply run in debt except of course Miss Vynne who also requires her money.

I enclose you a cheque for £50. I will pay Bales Bill. This is only for the Defence. You [REST IS CROSS-WRITTEN AT TOP OF FIRST PAGE] must pay what is wanted and I will repay myself out of the legacy when it comes. Let me know you get it safely.

Yrs very sincerely
Jessie Boucherett

I forgot to say how much I like this month's Review which came this morning.

Letter 2 (part). [*Printed address*]

March 5th 1903

Willingham
Market Rasen

My dear Miss Mackenzie

I'm writing to explain about that telegram this morning. I got a letter from Miss Vynne saying that the barmaids were sending a remonstrance to the NUWW and wanted the Defence to back them. Lady Frances requested Miss Vynne to write a letter in support . . .

APPENDIX 10

Letters sent to the editors of Saga Publishing Ltd. and *The Lady Magazine*

6 April 2001

Dear Sir

I am a semi-retired woman, engaged in research for a PhD into women's employment in clerical occupations, and as part of this I am very keen to contact women who worked in offices during the 20th century, prior to about 1980.

Is it possible for your magazine to carry a letter or a short article, requesting that such women get in touch with me if they are prepared to answer a questionnaire, or maybe agree to an interview or telephone conversation (even email) on the subject? I would like to hear from anyone who held an office job, full-time or part-time, at any stage of their lives, especially if they initially took a course in typewriting and/or shorthand. I would also particularly like to contact women whose mothers, daughters or granddaughters took up office employment, as I hope to include examples from three generations of one family.

If it is not possible to have a letter printed, would you recommend that I take out a classified advertisement in the magazine? If so, what would this cost? Which issue would be involved?

Looking forward to your early reply, I am

Yours faithfully

A. Bridger (Mrs)

APPENDIX 11

Letter to the Editor of *The Reading Chronicle*, together with a photocopy of the version published in that newspaper on 12 April 2001

6 April 2001

The Editor
The Reading Chronicle
50-56 Portman Road
READING
RG30 1BA

Dear Sir

I am a semi-retired woman, engaged in research into women's employment in clerical occupations, and as part of this I am very keen to contact women who worked in offices during the 20th century, prior to about 1980.

Is it possible for your paper to carry a letter or short article, requesting that such women get in touch with me if they are prepared to answer a questionnaire, or maybe agree to an interview or telephone conversation (even email!) on the subject? I would like to hear from anyone who held an office job, full-time or part-time, at any stage of their lives, especially if they initially took a course in typewriting and/or shorthand. I would also particularly like to contact women whose mothers, daughters or granddaughters took up office employment, as I hope to include examples from three generations of one family.

If it is not possible to have an article or letter printed, would you recommend that I take out a classified advertisement in the paper? If so, what would this cost?

Looking forward to your early reply, I am

Yours faithfully

A Bridger (Mrs)

18 *Chronicle*, Thursday, April 12, 2001

Did you used to work in an office?

I AM engaged in research into women's employment in clerical work and I am keen to contact women employed in offices prior to about 1980.

I would like to hear from anyone who held an office job, full-time or part-time, at any stage in their lives, especially if they initially took a course in typewriting and/or shorthand. I would also particularly like to contact women whose mothers, daughters or granddaughters took up office employment, as I hope to include examples from three generations of one family.

ANNE BRIDGER

APPENDIX 12

Explanatory letter to younger informants, who had completed questionnaires, but who were not included in the study

25 September 2001

Dear

You may have wondered whether I was going to respond to your kind offer to be interviewed, after you had completed my questionnaire earlier this year.

It now seems as though I will not be following up your offer. Although it is still possible that I might expand my data collection to include your age-group at a later stage in my research programme, at the present time the decision has been taken to curtail my interview schedule.

This means that only the much older ladies, who left school during the 1930s, are to be interviewed. I have retained the completed questionnaires for your group, in the hope that I might one day be able to put them to use.

I do appreciate the help you have already provided, and hope that I will have an opportunity to keep in touch in the future.

Yours very sincerely

Anne Bridger

APPENDIX 13

Correspondence from Jessie Boucherett to Antoinette Mackenzie, illustrating Boucherett's 'directive' rôle in setting up the Freedom of Labour Defence group (GCIP/SPTW 4/4)

20 South Eaton Place SW

Jan 10th 1903

[note added under this date: 'To be kept']

My dear Miss Mackenzie

I saw Miss Vynne here yesterday and she told me her views.

She objects to being "assistant Secretary" and requires to be Secretary.

I said to her that she was so Harum Scarum that if people sent her letters with cheques in them she would be sure to loose [sic] them. She admitted that was possible and she does not wish to have subscriptions sent to her. She wishes you to be Treasurer and for subscriptions to be sent to you and to have Miss Torrans [sic]¹ as assistant Secretary.

There is a typist who is a great supporter of our cause who is going to take an office in Westminster and who will let us have a room as an office at a moderate rent.

All this will cost a great deal of money but she is sanguine she can get it.

I doubt her getting much money as ours is an unpopular cause, but Miss Meynell Ingram left me a legacy and I am going to make over two Thousand of it to the Defence Committee & the Review. The interest of this in the funds would be £50 a year, but though we will talk economically about the interest we shall really spend the capital. ~~If we spend the capital~~ As long as I live I will pay for the Review but I will leave give £500 of the £2000 to keep on the Review after I am gone.

This leaves 1500 for the Defence. If we spend £250 a year the money will last six years and I have left in my Will £2000 more to the Defence. That will keep it going ~~expect~~ [for some?] years and by that time we shall either have won the victory or been hopelessly defeated but I think we shall have won and shall have become a powerful body with subscriptions.

I shall tell the Committee on Tuesday about the ~~£2000~~ 1500 which I am going to make over to them but I shall say nothing about the £2000 which is left in my Will.

I propose to give you now £50 as Editor² instead of £20 as sub-editor. You will have some trouble as Hon. Treasurer but with Miss Torrans as assistant Secretary you will not have any serious bother about the subscriptions, as she will keep the accounts straight.

You had better keep this letter.

Yrs very Sincerely

Jessie Boucherett

We had a long talk with Miss Drew and others and it is all right

¹ Torrans is correctly spelt Torrance. See Appendix 13a

² Mackenzie edited *The Englishwoman's Review* and chaired the FLD

APPENDIX 13a

Brief details of the Freedom of Labour Defence group (GCIP/SPTW 4/4)

When the Freedom of Labour Defence group was winding up its affairs in 1913, eight years after Boucherett's death, they published a Report which contained information relating to the group's origins. The following is a reproduction of the notes for that printed Report, which are contained in the above file:

The Freedom of Labour Defence

On Tuesday, June 3 1913, an interesting, if little known Society came to an end as far as its active life is concerned, though its records are still retained, and, together with all information collected in the course of its labours, are still at the service of any who wish to consult them.

The Freedom of Labour Defence was founded by Miss Jessie Boucherett and Miss Helen Blackburn in 1899, when the Factory Act, finally passed in 1901, was in contemplation by Parliament.¹ These two ladies had for many years taken an active interest in all questions concerning women and their work, and they were profoundly impressed by the dangers to the community in the crude proposals put forward in the first drafts of the Bills, and the serious consequences to the most helpless workers, especially women workers, which would have resulted, had certain clauses passed in their original form.

Miss Boucherett provided the sinews of war, and brought an original mind to bear on the subject, and Miss Blackburn contributed the powers of her wise and statesman-like intellect, and the marvellous capacity for work, recognised by all who had the privilege of association with her in her labours.

They gathered round them a small band of enthusiastic workers, with whose help they organised meetings for working men and women, interviews with workers and employers, drawing room meetings, &c. They issued pamphlets, sketches and other literature, and obtained trustworthy information for the use of the Members of Parliament working on the Bills. By these and other means they influenced public opinion, and there can be little doubt that it was partly owing to their exertions that the objectionable clauses were considerably amended before the Factory Bills developed into The Factory Act of 1901.

Ever since that date the Freedom of Labour Defence has continued its work – opposing proposals which bore too heavily on women's work, gathering information, examining into grievances, especially among Home Workers, and carrying out to the best of their powers the methods initiated by their lost leaders.

Latterly, however, the Committee has been drawn towards the conclusion that its particular active work is practically done. New conditions have been evolved out of the struggles of the past thirteen years, with new possibilities & hopes for women, and also new dangers and disabilities calling for new methods of defence.

On June 3 at a General Meeting held under the Presidency of Lady Frances Balfour, it was decided to accept the recommendation of the Executive Committee that the active work of the Society should cease. At her death in 1905 Miss Boucherett left funds which she considered would serve the Freedom of Labour Defence for seven or eight years – a forecast of singular accuracy. The Executive Committee proposed, and their proposal was agreed to by the Meeting, that the Secretary most closely associated with the work from its earliest stages should be put in charge of the Society's work, as a centre of reference & information and that a suitable salary should be assured to her by the investment of the remaining funds – an Annual

¹ They launched the FLD after the split from Ada Heather-Bigg's Women's Industrial Defence Committee, which had been supported by SPEW 1892-1895 (see Chapter 3, 3.5.4)

Meeting and any necessary 'Emergency Meetings' of the Executive Committee, making more active work immediately possible, in the event of the need of it arising.

While the workers so long associated could not but feel regret at the cessation of their active work, there was a note of triumph in the address of Lady Frances Balfour, as she emphasized the fact that the work of the Society had been one factor among the many which had left it without scope for its particular work. That, as she pointed out, was the greatest justification of its existence, and it remained for each member of the Freedom of Labour Defence, alone or in concert with others, to carry on the battle for the true Freedom of Women's Labour into the new & difficult conditions of the day.

The address of the Society will now be:
Freedom of Labour Defence (Sec: Miss Torrance)
c/o Miss Mackenzie
73 Beaufort Mansions
Chelsea, SW

APPENDIX 14

SPEW'S 1860 REPORT TO SUBSCRIBERS AFTER AFFILIATION TO NAPSS

The Society for Promoting the Employment of Women was, for a short period in its history, affiliated to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. The subscribers' meeting at which the conditions for this relationship were set out was held on 17 February 1860, and SPEW's Report and Rules were recorded as follows:

SOCIETY
for promoting the
EMPLOYMENT OF WOMEN,
in connexion with the
National Association for the Promotion of
Social Science

At a Meeting of the Subscribers held on February 17th, 1860, at
3, Waterloo Place, Pall Mall, W.,

The Right Honourable
THE EARL OF SHAFTESBURY
in the chair

Miss Emily Faithfull [the Secretary] read a letter from Miss Jessie Boucherett, regretting her unavoidable absence. The Report of the Managing Committee was then read.

REPORT

The Committee have requested your presence in order to lay before you a report of their proceedings since the last meeting of the Subscribers. Soon after the provisional establishment of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, it received so much support and encouragement that Miss Jessie Boucherett, the Founder of the Society, was anxious to take every means to consolidate its constitution and to place it on a permanent basis. With this view she was desirous that the Society should, if possible, be connected with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, in order to obtain the sanction and support of that important Association, and to be strengthened by its yearly increasing weight and influence.

Miss Boucherett applied on the subject to Mr Hastings, who informed her he could give no definite reply, as the question of such an affiliation as she proposed must be laid before the Council of the National Association; but that should the Council entertain the application, our Society would probably be required to modify some of its rules so as to assimilate them more nearly to those of the Work House Visiting Society – the only Society which was as yet in connexion with the National Association. Further consideration of the matter was delayed for a short time, and meanwhile the Council of the National Association appointed a Committee to consider and report on the subject of Female Employment - the members of which Committee consisted of six ladies and six gentlemen - and of the six ladies appointed, four, viz. Miss Jessie Boucherett, Miss Bessie Rayner Parkes, Miss Adelaide Procter, and Miss Emily Faithfull were already members of the Committee of our Society. It seemed very desirable that these two Committees, both assembled with the same purpose, should unite their efforts; and it also appeared a suitable time to bring forward the question of the affiliation of our Society to the National Association.

The Committee of this Society was called at 26 Castle Street, on the 30th of November 1859, and the following resolution was proposed and unanimously carried: 'That the Members of this Committee who are also Members of the Committee appointed by the Council of the National Association, be empowered to settle the conditions which shall be observed in affiliating this Society to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.'

The question of the affiliation of this Society was brought before the Council of the National Association, and passed on the condition of certain rules being adopted by our Society. These rules related merely to the management of the Society, and the mode of administration of the funds of the Society, and did not in any way affect the fundamental principles and objects for the advancement of which the Society was formed.

These conditions were submitted to the four ladies we have named, who, in the name of the General Committee, and empowered by them, accepted the following Officers and Rules: ... [*See Appendix 15*]

The members of the Committee have great pleasure in announcing that classes for the instruction of women have already been opened, that they trust very shortly still farther to extend their operations, that the funds of the Society are daily augmenting, and that the steady and increasing support of influential and benevolent persons testifies to the satisfactory progress of the principle to which this Society is devoted.

Moved by Robert Slaney, Esq, seconded by Miss B R Parkes, and carried "That the cordial thanks of this meeting be given to Viscount Raynham, MP, and the other gentlemen and ladies who aided in the formation of this Society."

February, 1860

EMILY FAITHFULL, Secretary

N.B. The Committee will feel obliged if the Subscribers will interest their several Solicitors as the Class of Law Copyists are now competent to undertake work.

[printers] Faithfull & Co, Victoria Press, Great Coram Street, WC

APPENDIX 15

SPEW'S OFFICERS AFTER AFFILIATION TO NAPSS (FEBRUARY 1860)

President:

Right Hon. the Earl of Shaftesbury

Vice-Presidents:

Right Rev the Lord Bishop of London

Right Rev the Lord Bishop of Oxford

Right Hon W E Gladstone MP

Vice-Chancellor Sir William Page Wood

Committee:

E Ackroyd Esq

Miss Bayne

Stephen Cave, Esq MP

Miss Jessie Boucherett

W Strickland Cookson, Esq

Hon Mrs W Cowper

Sir Francis Goldsmid, Bart, MP

Miss Isa Craig

G W Hastings Esq

The Lady Elizabeth Cust

Hon Arthur Kinnaird MP

Miss Matilda M Hays

Rev C Mackenzie MA

Mrs Jameson

Horace Mann Esq

Hon Mrs Locke King

R Monckton Milnes Esq MP

Miss Bessie Rayner Parkes

John Pares Esq

Miss Adelaide Procter

Robert A Slaney Esq MP

The Lady Catherine Ricardo

Mrs Tait

Secretary – Miss Emily Faithfull

APPENDIX 16

SPEW'S RULES AFTER AFFILIATION TO NAPSS (FEBRUARY 1860)

RULES

- I. The Society is formed for promoting the employment of women in industrial pursuits, and is established in connexion with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.
- II. Every person who pays an annual subscription of ten shillings or a life subscription of five pounds, is a member of the Society. The annual subscription is due on the 24th of June each year.
- III. Subscriptions and donations in aid of special objects undertaken by the Society, are received.
- IV. The Society has a President, Vice-Presidents, and Secretary.
- V. The Society is governed by a general committee, consisting of the officers named in the preceding rule, and of twenty-four other members, of whom twelve are ladies and twelve are gentlemen, nominated by the council of the National Association.
- VI. The general committee reports to the council of the National Association once in each quarter of the year.
- VII. The general committee appoints a managing sub-committee, and such other sub-committees as they think fit, for the conduct of the business of the society.
- VIII. The funds of the society are kept in the name of the society at a banker's. All sums received are paid to the bankers, and all cheques on the bankers are drawn by order of the managing committee, and are signed by two members of such sub-committee and countersigned by the secretary.
- IX. An auditor is annually appointed by the council of the National Association, to audit the accounts of the society for the year.
- X. The accounts of the society are made up to the 24th of June in each year, and after being duly audited are appended to the annual report of the general committee.
- XI. The annual meeting of the society is held at the same place and time as the annual meeting of the National Association.
- XII. The general committee present a report to the annual meeting.
- XIII. At all meetings of the general committee or sub-committee the chairman has a vote, and if the votes be equal he has also a casting vote.
- XIV. For meetings of the general committee five members, and for sub-committees three members form a quorum.
- XV. No new rule is valid until confirmed by the council of the National Association.

The Managing Committee of our Society was called, when Miss Jessie Boucherett, Miss Bessie R Parkes, Miss Adelaide Procter, and Miss Emily Faithfull, reported their proceedings, and laid the new regulations of the Society before the Committee, which regulations were then formally and unanimously adopted.

APPENDIX 17

PUBLICATIONS OF JESSIE BOUCHERETT 1860-1896

The English Woman's Journal

- 1860 'On the Obstacles to the Employment of Women' *EWJ* IV, no.24:361-75
- 1861 'Local Societies' *EWJ* VIII, no.46:217-23
- 1862 'Endowed Schools, Their Uses and Shortcomings' *EWJ* IX, no.49:20-28
- 1863 'The Temperance Movement and Working Women' *EWJ* XI:176-80
- 1864 'On the Cause of the Distress Prevalent among Single Women' *EWJ* XII, no.72:400-09
- 1864 'Adelaide Anne Procter' *EWJ* XIII, no.27:17-21

The Englishwoman's Review

- 1866 'The Work We Have to Do' *EWJ* I, no.1:1-5
- 1870 'Future Plans' *EWJ* New Series Vol.I:1-4
- 1873 'Legislative Restrictions on Women's Labour' *EWJ* New Series XVI:249-258
- 1875 'Mrs Nassau Senior on the Education of Pauper Girls' *EWJ* New Series, January, Vol.6 no.XXI:13-16
- 1875 'Mrs Nassau Senior on the Education of Pauper Girls' *EWJ* New Series, February, Vol.6 no.XXII:49-54
- 1889 'Caroline Ashurst Biggs' *EWJ* CXCVI:387-89
- 1894 'The Report on the Employment of Women, by the Lady Assistant Commissioners' *EWJ* New Series CCXX January 17: 1-14
- 1894 'The Report on the Employment of Women, by the Lady Assistant Commissioners' [continued] *EWJ* (New Series) CCXXI April 16:73-79
- 1894 'The Report by the Lady Assistant Commissioners on the Employment of Women' [continued] *EWJ* CCXXII July 16:149-156

Contemporary Review

- 1867 'The Condition of Women in France' *Contemporary Review* V:98-113

Books or Chapters in Books

- 1863 *Hints on Self-Help: a Book for Young Women* London: S W Partridge
- 1869 'How to Provide for Superfluous Women' in *Woman's Work and Woman's Culture*, edited by Josephine Butler. London: Macmillan
- 1869 'How to Provide for Superfluous Women' in *Strong-Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from 19th-Century England*, edited by Janet Horowitz Murray, Harmondsworth, Penguin: 1982
- 1884 'The Industrial Movement' in *The Woman Question in Europe: A Series of Original Essays*, edited by Theodore Stanton. London, Sampson Low, Marston. Searle and Rivington

Joint Authorship

- 1896 *The Condition of Working Women and the Factory Acts* (Jessie Boucherett and Helen Blackburn). London, Elliot Stock

Unattributed, but likely to be by Jessie Boucherett

- 1867 'A false principle' *EWB* Vol.I (First Series), no.III:123-132 (April)

APPENDIX 18

Letter to *The Times* from Matilda Hays 29.4.1862, which caused offence to Mr Edgar

‘To the Editor of *The Times*

Sir, - Every self-respecting woman must congratulate herself and her sex that woman and woman’s position in England have at last found so just and powerful an exponent as “S.G.O.” I am but expressing the feeling of many other women when I say that, during the recent discussion which has taken place about emigration, we have wished, yet scarcely hoped, that among the many self-called “lords of the creation” who write of woman and her social *status*, some one true and noble man would raise his voice in earnest and indignant repudiation of the blind, we could almost say blasphemous, assertion that one-half of the human race is destined, as “S.G.O.” says, “only to share the honour after their kind which the white mice and rabbits of one’s children share after theirs.”

What! The Almighty has given us sense, thought, feeling, imagination, patience, long-suffering, and benevolence, keener sense of right and wrong, deeper intuitions and purer instincts – all that, in the words of the great dramatist, we may “suckle fools and chronicle small beer,” allowed no share in the world’s work, the world’s progress; no platform but the childless hearth or the teeming nursery, and, if these may not be ours, jostled and pushed aside to rot in inaction, if we have the means to find ourselves food, shelter, and clothing; if we have not, to wrest or steal a living as we best can – doing hardest, coarsest work for worst pay; grinding out soul and body for the day’s food and shelter; thankful only that be attained – not daring to look to the morrow; or, hopeless and helpless, sinking into the ranks of legalized or unlegalized prostitution, as circumstances guide or drive us!

Could men – aye, such men as hold their heads high, and talk and write of women as though all they knew of them were derived from intercourse with the fallen and degraded of the sex – could men know what true and high-minded women think and say among themselves; how their whole nature shrinks alike from the coarse, if covert, ribaldry, and the no less coarse, if open, assertion that woman is a breeding animal only; how the best and noblest stand aloof in isolated dignity, preferring the martyrdom of unsatisfied affections and sympathies to the surrender of their independence and integrity as human souls, accountable to their God, and their God only, for what they are and do: even these men, degraded as manhood is within them, would pause and ask – “Can we afford on the one hand to degrade ‘our women’, on the other to alienate from us and drive to silent revolt those who know the value of a human soul, male or female, - women, who will never wear the coarse degrading fetters we would forge for them, who will meet us only as equals, love us only if pure and good and true as themselves; women, who, thus loved and loving, will be true wives and mothers where now we have puppets and dolls, who, neither respecting themselves nor respected by us, like ‘rabbits and mice’, perpetuate a breed the world were better without!”

The position of women in England and the estimation in which they are held are a fatal disease at the root of our civilization, - a disease which festers in what is called the “social evil”, which eats like a cancer into the homes and hearts of the nation, where women, as wives, are bought and sold, and (God save the mark!) too often sell themselves into legalized prostitution; a disease which fastens on the lonely and helpless among us like ague and fever, crippling the best effort, crushing, and starving, and wearing us to death – a disease which pollutes the very life-springs of the country.

Public attention, thank God, is at length in some degree directed to this great and growing evil.

If to the small band of pioneers, men and women, who for the last five years have been working for some amelioration, however slight, of the position and condition of the hapless, helpless thousands of women who ask only for leave to work and live, can be added the trumpet tones of loyal men like “S.G.O.” – men loyal to God and humanity – surely the great heart of the nation will at last be stirred to come forward with help and redress. I am, Sir,

A working woman and the friend of working women,
London, April 28. MATILDA M. HAYS.

Edgar's Letter to Miss Crowe, SPEW Secretary

National Association for the Promotion of Social Science

Office of the London Meeting,
12 Old Bond Street, W.

2nd May 1862

My dear Miss Crowe

As I intend bringing a matter connected with your Society before the Council of the National Association on Friday the 9th May, it is only right that I should give you notice of what I propose doing, in order that you may inform your Committee of the course I have resolved to adopt.

A letter appeared in the Times of April the 29th, signed "Matilda M. Hays" who, I understand is the Miss Hays who is a member of your Committee. The great offence which this letter has generally given renders it necessary in my opinion that Miss Hays should cease to be a member of your Committee, and I shall therefore propose under your 5th Rule that the name of Miss Hays be struck off the list and that of another substituted. I shall be happy to name any lady whom your Committee may suggest.

If, however, your Committee does not take the same view of the letter of Miss Hays that I do, and wishes her still to remain one of its members, then I propose to move at the meeting of Council that the Resolution passed Oct. 22d 1859 be rescinded and that the connexion between the Association & your Society cease. The affiliation of your Society to the Association was strongly objected to by myself & other members of the Council at the time from the danger of your compromising us in any way. It is the fear of this which has induced me to resolve on the course above stated.

I remain,
Yours very truly
A. Edgar

Miss Crowe
Secretary to Society
for Employment of Women

APPENDIX 19

Categories of Feminism, as Identified by Olive Banks*

There were different ideologies expressed by the individual women whom Banks portrayed as 'First Wave' feminists, which she has categorised on the basis of 'the ideas expressed by the women directly in articles, books, pamphlets and letters as well as in reports of speeches and lectures' (Banks 1986:73). Although most women fell into more than one ideological category, she was able to identify nine different positions, representing different aspects of feminism. These are summarised below.

<i>CATEGORY</i>	<i>EXPLANATION</i>
1. Unmarried Women ('economic necessity')	Arguments justifying particular claims on the basis of the needs of unmarried women, who had to support themselves in the absence of a husband or father. Bessie Rayner Parkes is offered as an example of this position
2. Autonomy	Revolt against tradition view enshrined in customs, religion and the law, that women didn't exist in their own right but only in relation to men. Frances Power Cobbe argued that women needed and deserved both identities and destinies of their own
3. Double Standard	Opposition to the double standard of sexual morality, the driving force behind the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Acts: a protest against women's sexual exploitation (Christabel Pankhurst identified with this category)
4. Equal Marriage	Reaction against the doctrine of women's subordination in marriage, replacing the traditional patriarchal and hierarchical view of marriage with concept of partnership. Josephine Butler supported this view
5. Economic Independence	Women who believed that women's dependence in marriage was ultimately economic. Changes in the law were insufficient, if women still dependent economically. Wives should have an independent source of income, either through equal pay for work or by state support
6. Co-operative House-keeping	More radical than 'equal marriage' as it places emphasis mainly on inequalities inherent in the division of labour in the home. Remedy would be communal provision of housework and child care
7. Mothers and Children	This category involves acceptance of the view that women are first and foremost mothers, so challenges

* *Becoming a Feminist: The Social Origins of 'First Wave' Feminism* 1986 Brighton, Wheatsheaf

only the conditions under which women (especially working-class women) are forced to carry out the role. Demands that greater resources should be made available to mothers (eg grants, allowances, etc)

8. Complementary Roles

Acceptance of distinctive roles for men and women based on women's actual or potential maternity close to traditional ideas on femininity but didn't accept the need for women's subordination in the home or exclusion from public sphere. Josephine Butler, for example, argued that women were needed in the public sphere *because* they were different from men: roles different, but complementary

9. Protection

Oppose pole to the category 'autonomy': takes a largely traditional view of women, emphasising their need for protection rather than desire for independence. Mainly concerned with protecting working-class women from dangerous work or over-long working hours

The category commanding the most support from 'first wave' feminists was 'autonomy' and 'reflects the importance of the equal rights tradition within feminism with its emphasis on individuality and personal liberty' (Banks 1986:78).

APPENDIX 20

Additional Donations from Jessie Boucherett to SPEW, 1860-1905

- 1860 Undertook to pay all expenses 'of every sort' for setting up and operating book-keeping classes
- 1863 Paid additional expenses for having a Postscript added to the Annual Report
- 1867 Gave £25
- 1868 Contributed extra £2, £1; then 15/- a week for each of three glass-engraving apprentices, for three months, when their master 'was in great pecuniary difficulty' and could no longer afford to pay them
- 1870 £20 for glass engraving fund
- 1871 Further donation of £5
- 1871 Footed the bill for separate parties for the Middle Class School girls, and the book-keeping students together with the apprentices
- 1871 Received a legacy of £350 which she donated to the Society (and insisted on the records not attributing it to her)
- 1872 Provided a room, rent-free, for Elizabeth Walker, glass engraver
- 1872 Boucherett's book 'Self Help...' influenced a father to teach his daughter upholstery (see 1875)
- 1873 Similar offer of accommodation for gilders of picture frames
- 1874 Contributed £2 towards whip-round in Committee to help Miss Thomas (teacher)
- 1875 Sent £25 to be distributed amongst the plan-tracing employes, as they were experiencing a slack time
- 1875 Undertook to pay three months' rent for upholstery workroom for girl who was setting up in business, having been taught upholstery by her father (see 1872)
- 1876 £10 donated
- 1877 Stood surety for the rent of the Society's premises
- 1878 Paid £5 towards an 'appeal'
- 1879 Funded a party for Post Office workers
- 1880 Sent £5 for a 'special fund' for the wood-engraving office
- 1880 Fee of £25 paid to Miss Collingridge to take another apprentice
- 1880 Boucherett and five other committee members combine to pay the Secretary's salary as she is 'in the country' on sick leave
- 1882 £8 13s. 0d. paid to the book-keeping fund

- 1883 Paid a further £10 for the rent of the wood-engraving office
- 1885 Paid for a party for the book-keeping students
- 1886 Lent £10 to a young women to pay her workers for making Christmas cards
- 1887 Lent £20 to Mrs Marshall (help towards cost of rescinding partnership of typewriting business)
- 1888 Offered to pay the premium for any 'suitable candidate' for an apprenticeship if SPEW funds too low
- 1891 £10 given for the cost of advertising for photogravure apprentices
- 1894 Another £10 for the engravers
- 1895 Gave £10 to the General Fund and £3 4s. 0d. for book-keeping fund
- 1896 Donated another £10 to the General Fund
- 1899 Paid £5 for cost of postage and hiring additional clerks to prepare Memorials to the Home Office (on plumbism)
- 1900 £100 given to pay for printing and circulation of a pamphlet 'The Fall of Women's Wages in Unskilled Work'
- 1903 Injected a further £250 into the *Englishwoman's Review* funds
- 1903 Gave SPEW £1,000 'for carrying on the work of the Society', on the condition that 'no fees shall be charged to applicants for registration for employment found, for advice or for help of any kind now given gratuitously by the Society'. If this condition was ignored, 'the said £1.000 or such part thereof as may not up to that time have been disbursed by the Society ... to require the same to be paid to the funds of Girton College Cambridge' (legal document dated 29 October 1903).
- 1905 Bequeathed the Society £2,000

APPENDIX 21

1867 Amendments to 1860 Rules

Extract from General Committee Minutes October 22nd 1867

The following alterations were now proposed.

Rule I, instead of 'and is now established in connexion &c' read 'and is in connexion with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science'

Rule II last clause, instead of 'the Annual subscription is due on the 24th of June in each year', read 'the annual subscription is due on the 25th of March in each year'

Rule V instead of 'The Society is governed by a General Committee consisting of the officers named in the preceding rule and of 24 other members of whom twelve are ladies and twelve gentlemen approved by the Council of the National Association' read 'The Society is governed by a General Committee consisting of the officers named in the preceding rule, and of other ladies and gentlemen, such Committee having power to add to its number'

Rule VIII instead of 'The funds of the Society are kept in the name of the Society at a Bankers. Allsums are paid to the Bankers and all cheques on the Bankers are drawn &c' read 'The funds of the Society are kept in the name of the Society at a Bank. All funds are paid in to the Bank, and all cheques are drawn by order of the Managing Committee, and are signed by two members of the Managing Committee and countersigned by the Secretary'

Rule X instead of 'The accounts of the Society are made up to the 24th of June' read 'the Accounts of the Society are made up to the 25th of March in each year and after being duly audited are appended to the Annual Report of the General Committee'

Rules XI and XII to be rescinded

At a meeting of the General Committee on March 31st 1868, the changes to the rules were approved. A letter from Mr Hastings said that the NAPSS also approved the changes in the rules and wanted also to substitute 'executive committee' for 'council' in what was now the 13th rule. This was agreed.

APPENDIX 22

The Case of Mrs Irwin: Entries in SPEW Minutes concerning her application for a loan for the purchase of a typewriter

Extracts from Minutes of Managing Committee 1890s*

14.03.90

Chair: Grosvenor

Bayne, Boucherett, Burbury, Fitch, Müller

Mrs Irwin the widow of a captain of a Merchant vessel who had been lost at sea applied for a loan of £10 towards the purchase of a typing machine. She has three sons one only of whom is able to earn anything & he is in an office receiving 8/- per week. Mrs Irwin lives at Selborne Street Liverpool where she has been trying to keep a school with her sister: but this does not pay their rent. She does not propose to open a typing office but she believes she could get work at her own home, or take out her machine. She has £6 towards the cost of the machine and she thinks that she might get one at a reduced rate.

As Mrs Irwin's prospects seem altogether vague the Secretary was requested to ask her for what sum she can buy the machine, and whether she has any definite promise of work if she succeeds in getting a machine and in learning to use it satisfactorily.

Also to write to Miss Perkins in whose office Mrs Irwin is learning whether she is likely to become a good typist.

If satisfactory answers to these inquiries are received, it was decided that a loan not exceeding £10 be granted to her.

28.3.90

Chair: Earle

Bayne, Grosvenor, Müller, Roberts,

The Secretary stated that she had written to Mrs Irwin asking whether she had any definite promises of work, and if she could get the typing machine of which she spoke at a reduced rate. Mrs Irwin replied that she could not get the machine as it is now in use that she is only now learning typing and has no promises of work.

Miss Perkins in whose office Mrs Irwin is learning in reply to inquiries about her said in confidence, that she feared she could not make a good typist as she suffers from rheumatism in her hands & from an injury received many years ago two fingers are shorter than the rest she lives 2 & 3 miles out of the town, so she would scarcely get work at home except through private introduction.

Miss Fanny Calder who is away from home at present has kindly promised to call upon Mrs Irwin on her return to Liverpool. The application will be reviewed when this report is received.

18.4.90

Chair: Grosvenor

Fitch, Müller

Read a letter from Miss Fanny Calder who has been to see Mrs Irwin about her application for a loan for typewriting. She does not consider that Mrs Irwin has much prospect of getting general work though Mrs Irwin herself is sanguine about it having some interest with the clergy of her neighbourhood. Miss Calder said that if Mrs Irwin had asked her advice before she paid for the lessons, she would certainly have advised her not to take them, but as Mrs Irwin has paid for these, she does not like to put any obstacle in the way of her receiving the loan.

As Mrs Irwin has not yet sent the names of any one willing to be security for her, nor of any who have promised to employ her, it was resolved that her application be reconsidered if she furnished these.

6.6.90

Chair: Roberts
Bayne, Locke King, Knightley

Read a letter from Mrs Irwin stating that she has been able to raise only £5 towards the purchase of her typing machine that she has the promise of some work from Mr Grylls.

After some discussion it was decided that Mrs Irwin be advised to buy a cheaper machine or one second hand which would probably cost about £15 as she did not propose to open an office but only to take work privately. Also as there seemed so little chance of her being able to repay any loan that the sum of £5 be given to her if she can by any means raise £10.

18.7.90

Chair: Grosvenor
Bayne, Crowe, Knightley

Read a letter from Mrs Irwin expressing her grateful thanks for the grant of £5 which had been made to her. She was unable to get a machine second hand as she was obliged to have one of the newest kind for the work which she has undertaken to do.

7.11.90

Chair: Grosvenor
Bayne, Crowe

Read a letter from Mrs Irwin saying that she has earned by her typing more than enough to keep up her monthly payments, the last of which will be due in January. That she has been able to teach her youngest boy aged 14 to type which has enabled him to get a situation in an office. She is very grateful to the Society for the help given her.

***Explanatory Notes Regarding the Above Entries:**

These are verbatim extracts from the Minutes of the Managing Committee of SPEW, covering a period of eight months. The Miss Fanny Calder referred to was the Society's 'representative' member in Liverpool, who acted as 'on-the-spot investigator' when local applicants for grants necessitated further enquiries.

Miss Perkins, who was Mrs Irwin's typing teacher, had herself been in receipt of help from the Society a few years earlier when she attended the typing office run by Mrs Marshall and Miss Garrett. The first mention of her occurs in Managing Committee Minutes of 12 June 1885, and her business's growth can be traced through subsequent entries for the next two and a half years.

The extent to which the Committee's networking operated all over the British Isles can be ascertained through the entries relating to Miss Perkins, who in October 1887 asked the Society to support a pupil of hers, Miss Fleming, in her venture to open a type-writing office in Edinburgh.

APPENDIX 23

Obituary and *In Memoriam* Appreciation of Mrs Constance Hoster 1864-1939

1. Obituary from *The Times* 3 June 1939

MRS CONSTANCE HOSTER - EMPLOYMENT OF EDUCATED WOMEN

Mrs Constance Hoster, who died at Sheffield Terrace, W., on June 1, was a woman of many gifts and interests, but she will be best remembered as a pioneer in the extension of the employment of educated women.

Born on July 8, 1864, she was a daughter of the late Dr. Marcus Kalisch, a distinguished Talmudic scholar, and a devoted sister of the late Alfred Kalisch, the musical historian and critic. She shared from her childhood the interests of both; the discipline of learning balanced her artistic sensibilities, and her love for and pride in her Jewish birth and faith enlarged her sympathies throughout her life. Her adult life – she married young and was long a widow – was given to an eminently practical career, upon which she concentrated her vitality. But together with her strenuous profession she fed the flames of her soul at the fires of music. And, fusing the two sides of her nature with an ardour ever fresh, she made of them a whole and became as years passed a character in which practical and imaginative qualities were so blended as to be of the greatest value both to her own generation and to those, many of younger generations, who passed through her college or who had the pleasure and the help of her private friendship.

Constance Hoster was a pioneer in the training of educated girls and women for positions as secretaries and allied professions in every branch of life, private, scholastic, commercial, political, both in England and abroad. "Mrs. Hoster's," indeed, became a sort of test word in the secretarial world, and her former pupils are among the leaders of their profession in every branch of work. Nearly 50 years ago she recognized the then opening market for trained women in responsible secretarial posts and set herself to equip her pupils in as varied attainments as possible. She founded and was the active head not only of the college and bureau which bear her name but was the instigator also of a number of the most successful and helpful societies for professional women, educational, artistic, political, and benevolent. She founded the Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund (since absorbed in the Society for Promoting the Training of Women), and also the Educated Women's War Emergency Training Fund. She was a vice-president of the Typists' Section of the Incorporated Phonographic Society and of the Society of Women Journalists, and a member of the committee of the London and National Society for Women's Service, of the London International, and French Chambers of Commerce, and of the Journal Committee of the London Chamber of Commerce, and of the Court of Referees of the Ministry of Labour. Outside this immediate interest she had also a wide record of public service. She was a vice-president of the City Branch of the League of Nations Union and of the British Women's Hospitality Committee, and a member of the committee of the Women's Branch of the City of London Conservative and Unionist Association, of the Council for the Representation of Women in the League of Nations, of the United Associations of Great Britain and France, of the International Council of Women, of the National Union of Societies for Equal Citizenship, and of the National Institute of Industrial Psychology. In the Jewish community she had been especially active since 1933 in the work of assisting and advising Jewish refugees from Germany, and she had been active in the work, from its establishment, of the Union of Jewish Women, of which she was a vice-president. She was a life governor both of the Royal Free Hospital and of the London Jewish Hospital.

To every cause she gave her work as well as her sympathy, and, being alive at so many points, she stimulated her colleagues and her students in like interests, especially in languages, history, and her beloved art of music. In this last her brother, Alfred Kalisch, was of the greatest help to her; for many years they gave the little leisure in their active lives to helping those less happily placed towards an appreciation of music, and many young artists owed to them a wider outlook and a better education. Amid her many interests Mrs Hoster kept intact her first and final aim to train, to enlighten, to establish the women of her profession in every branch of their work in such a way as to strengthen not only their personal characters and attainments but to dignify their standing in the national life. For this she worked, she fought, she carried aloft her banner with an unflinching hand. And not only her 30,000 students but the women of our own and many other countries owe her a gratitude which she never claimed.

2. Extract from SPTW Annual Report 1939

IN MEMORIAM

We have to record with very great regret the death of Mrs Hoster on June 1, 1939.

Through the death of Mrs Hoster we have lost one of our truest and most valued friends and supporters: her connection with the Society was a long and personal one as she served both on the Committee and as Hon. Secretary until pressure of other work obliged her to resign. She founded the Educated Women Workers' Loan Training Fund, which later, on her advice, was amalgamated with the Society for Promoting the Training of Women. Her interest in the Society was unfailing. She always remembered with gratitude the encouragement it gave her at the outset of her own career and attached immense value to its work, knowing from her wide experience the necessity of adequate and specialized training for all professions.

Mrs Hoster's first connection with the Society was through an introduction from Lady Battersea to Miss Gertrude King, Secretary of the Society for so many years. Those who knew Mrs Hoster only in her later years, when she had established for herself a unique position in the business and professional world, may not fully realize her early struggles. Faced in 1893 with the necessity of earning a living or being dependent on others, she decided to launch out into quite unknown waters and, in spite of great opposition, started on her business career. It was at this very difficult moment of her life that she was encouraged by Miss King to "go forward", and to this advice, for which she never ceased to be grateful, she attributed much of her future success, a gratitude which she expressed in founding the 'Gertrude King Scholarship' in 1920.

Mrs Hoster had many interests, but her first and final aim was the training of educated women and girls in the secretarial and allied professions. To this work, in which she was the acknowledged pioneer, she devoted her life. Nearly fifty years ago she had the vision to foresee the future opportunities for trained women. She founded the College, Typewriter Offices and Appointments Bureau which bear her name, and spared no effort to make the training as complete and comprehensive as possible, and to widen the field of openings for women. For this she worked up to the end, and there are many beyond her own students who owe her a gratitude for which she never asked, but which has been very widely acknowledged from former pupils and friends from all parts of the world.

Carrying into a business life the highest standards of work and character, hers was a great influence for good, and to many she gave not only a new standard of work, but also a new and wider outlook on life. Work was her life force, leisure frequently an interval in which to develop some new idea or plan some fresh activity. The last years of her life were shadowed by the persecution of her Race, and it seemed as if her ardent spirit could not rest while there were still so many claiming her sympathy and help.

Her life's work, summed up, is the record of a woman of undaunted courage, clear vision, great tenacity of purpose, immense capacity for taking trouble, wide sympathies, and a very stimulating and withal a very lovable personality. Had she lived to see the present tragedy she would have faced it with the same calm courage with which she had faced other troubles, and her anxiety would have been how best to help those in need. We shall remember her as a woman of great gifts of heart and mind who used those gifts in pioneer work for her own and succeeding generations. May the torch she lit in 1893 be carried on with unfaltering hands. No greater tribute could be paid. No greater tribute could she ask.

APPENDIX 24

BYE-LAWS OR RULES

(From Annual Reports 1909 and 1932)

Extract from SPEW Annual Report 1909

1. The Society is formed for promoting the Training of Women, and their employment in industrial pursuits.
2. Every person who pays an Annual Subscription of Ten Shillings, or a Donation of Five Pounds, is a Member of the Society. The Annual Subscription is due on the 25th of March in each year.
3. Subscriptions and Donations in aid of Special Objects undertaken by the Society are received.
4. The Society has a President, Vice-Presidents, a Treasurer, and a Secretary.
5. The Society is governed by a General Committee, consisting of not less than fifteen nor more than thirty ladies and gentlemen, elected annually by the Members at the Ordinary General Meeting of the Society.
6. The General Committee meet monthly.
7. The General Committee appoint from their Members such Sub-Committees as they think fit for the conduct of the business of the Society. No one can be elected a Member of a Sub-Committee who has not attended at least one Meeting of the General Committee.
8. The Funds of the Society are kept in the name of the Society at a bank, all sums are paid into the bank, and all cheques are drawn by order of the Committee, and are signed by the Treasurer and one Member of the Committee, or by two Members of the Committee, and in either case countersigned by the Secretary.
9. The accounts of the Society are made up to the 25th of March in each year, and, after being duly audited, are appended to the Annual Report of the General Committee.
10. At all meetings of the General Committee or Sub-Committee the Chairman has a vote, and if the votes be equal he [sic] has also a casting vote.
11. For Meetings of the General Committee five Members, and for Sub-Committees three Members, to form a quorum.

RULES OF THE LOAN FUNDS

Available for Young Women training for Professional or Technical Careers

- (1) The Committee of the Society for Promoting the Training of Women grant loans (without interest) to educated women who wish to train for professional, commercial, or technical work, but who are unable to pay the fees.
- (2) Each Applicant is required to state her reasons for needing a loan, and must furnish evidence of satisfactory health. She must also give the names and addresses of at least two referees, not relatives, one of whom must be well acquainted with her family and circumstances, the other must be the Principal of the school or college at which she was educated, or be otherwise acquainted with her capabilities. The Referees do not incur any liability for the repayment of the loan. No loan shall be granted before the letters of recommendation have been received.
- (3) Every Applicant must furnish the name and address of a friend, not a parent, who will guarantee the repayment of the loan if she should fail to keep her agreement. A stamped agreement is sent to every guarantor to sign.
- (4) The Grantee is requested not to decide on any particular College or Course of Training until her application has been considered by the Committee. Except under very exceptional circumstances, the loan shall not be granted if she breaks this rule. The Committee reserve the right to withhold the grant should they not approve the Training Centre selected by the Grantee.
- (5) The Grantee is required to furnish a terminal report of her progress and the Secretary shall, at her discretion, also ask for a report from the Principal of the College, Institution, Office or business at which the Grantee is training. The Grantee is also requested to communicate with the Secretary a month before the completion of her training, giving full particulars of her requirements and qualifications, and enclosing a letter and Certificate from the Principal of the Training School or College. She is also advised to consult the Secretary before accepting any position, if possible.
- (6) Loans are granted under an Agreement as between the Grantee and the Secretary on behalf of the Society. The repayment shall be by monthly or terminal instalments, to be continued until the whole of the loan granted shall have been repaid. The first instalment shall become due at the expiration of one month after the Grantee is in receipt of a salary, or, in any case, at the expiration of three months after she has finished her training, whichever shall be the earlier. The amount of each instalment shall be not less than 15 per cent on the amount of salary earned by the Grantee. In the case of Grantees who have to form their own connections after training, the repayments must begin at the end of three months after the training is completed, and must not be less than 4s a month. Loans for training fees must only be used for the purpose specified, and when possible, must be paid by the Society direct to the Training Centre.
- (7) When Application is made for a renewed loan, the Principal of the Institution, Office, or business firm in which the Grantee is receiving her training, will be required to send a report of her progress, in accordance with which the Committee will adjudge the renewal of the loan.
- (8) Every Grantee is requested to inform the Secretary of the Society at once of any change in her address or circumstances, also of her engagements, after completion of training, until such time as the whole of the loan or loans granted to her has been repaid.
- (9) If the Grantee refuses to continue her training, or does any act whereby she is disqualified from continuing it and earning a salary, or if she marries, or fails to keep her agreement, either she or her guarantor, must, on receiving notice from the Secretary, repay half of the loan within three months of the receipt of that notice, and the other half within the three months following.
- (10) Refusal of an Application does not in any way reflect on the applicant, and in all cases the decision of the Committee is final, and no reason for any such refusal can be given.
- (11) All Payments must be made payable to the Secretary.

APPENDIX 25

Example of Reports on Book-Keeping Successes

(Extract from Minutes *GCM* 9.4.1880)

An examination of the Book-keeping Class having been held on Tuesday March 23rd, Mr Green's report was read. Fourteen candidates presented themselves for Examination, 11 of whom gained certificates.

100 max. marks

Emily Towell	99	High satisfactory
Helen G Young	97	A capital paper
Alice Dredge	93	Very neat and accurate
Annie Johnston	90	Very satisfactory
Nora Wood	90	Good style
Marian Withers	89	Rather too difficult
Florence Chapman	88	Very accurate. Writing needs improvement
Margaret Brown	85	Good writing
Emma Goodwin	80	Very neat. Three errors in spelling
Ellen Levermore	79	Painstaking
Alice Weightman	78	Neat

Extract from SPEW Annual Report 1881

The Committee desire to bear testimony to the energy and efficiency of Miss Warne, by whom these classes continue to be conducted. Her high tone and excellent influence are invaluable. She is always ready to assist any of her old pupils if any difficulty arises in their work, and is their true and sympathetic friend. A very large part of the almost invariable success of the students is due to her, and the Committee are glad to have this opportunity of recording publicly their appreciation of her services. The class is held on Monday and Thursday evenings from 7 till 8.30. The fee is sixpence weekly. During the year 51 students joined the class. Some of these found work before completing the course; 24 sat for examination, 19 received certificates. The present class has 14 students.

APPENDIX 26

Maria S. Rye's letter to *The Times* 28 April 1862

FEMALE MIDDLE-CLASS EMIGRATION

TO THE EDITOR OF *THE TIMES*

Sir, - The twining of the red tape was bad enough, but this hempen rope of "S.G.O.s's" is destruction indeed. I hope the public will forbid strangulation, and, with your assistance, I shall endeavour to untwist both tape and twine.

Agreeing, as I most cordially do, with "S.G.O." as to the necessity of women receiving 'a thorough education,' and the duty of parents to make daughters, as well as sons, look upon labour as an honour, and one of the essential points in life, I am nevertheless compelled to ask, - Supposing women were trained, and that each girl possessed the necessary knowledge to work her way in life, what then? A surplus will, unless we are greatly mistaken, remain a surplus to the end of the story; and surely neither your correspondent nor his admirers will ever dream of a wholesale restoration in England of nunneries and convents, or draw any comparison between a competitive career in London and the comparatively leisurely life of a colonist. All I can say is this: - Knowing as I do that while here, with extreme difficulty and great self-denial, really educated women must toil on many, many hours a day to make £200 a year, and that there, in the colonies, persons who in this country would scarcely be considered competent to conduct the quietest village school are receiving £130 and £124 a year for salaries as governesses, that the possibility of there being two opinions on the matter strikes me with great and increasing amazement.

I not only believe, but am confident, that there are vacant situations in the colonies for many hundreds of women vastly superior to the hordes of wild Irish and fast young ladies who have hitherto started as emigrants. If these women of mine work, it will be well; if they marry, it will be well; whichever happens, good must arise for the colonies, for our countrywomen, and for commerce. As to marriages, I presume it will be allowed that even here, if we take no thought of the mental calibre and moral worth of men, we may change our names as often as we like. The same womanly instinct that has preserved us here from making imprudent matches will follow and guide us there. Happily, we need take no thought about this question, which may very safely be left for individual decision.

But it may be asked, - 'If emigration is likely to effect so much good, how is it that women do not avail themselves of such golden openings?' Firstly, from ignorance; secondly, from want of funds; thirdly, because such a disreputable set of women have for so many years past formed the bulk of our emigrants that respectable persons very properly decline accompanying them. A better knowledge of the social condition of the colonies is becoming general; the necessary funds to secure assisted passages are now in our hands, and in time we hope and trust we shall be able to make it perfectly safe and perfectly respectable for women of sterling worth to go abroad.

I would remind all who are hesitating about the advisability of emigration to remember, that in olden times ten men brought evil tidings of Canaan itself; yet the land was a good land, in spite of the wretched report, and it fared mightily well with those who had courage to march on and possess it. The matter is now virtually in the hands of the women of this country. They must decide their own fate.

Your obedient servant, MARIA S. RYE.
12, Portugal street, Lincoln's-inn, April 28.

APPENDIX 27

Extracts from 'Jimmies' Journal' 1934

THE MEMORIAL SCHOLARSHIP.

The Examinations were held in January and September, 1934, for the two Free Scholarships, which Mr. Spencer Munt gives annually in memory of the late Mrs. Spencer Munt. The competition for these much coveted Scholarships was very keen on both occasions.

In January there were ten entries, and the successful candidate was Miss Bridget Hill, of the Kerri School, Reigate. Miss Hill has since gained her Diploma and Shield.

In September eighteen candidates entered, and the Scholarship was won by Miss Marion McNulty, of the Priory, Haywards Heath.

Miss Ruth Warmington, winner of the first Scholarship, after one year's valuable experi-

ence in legal work, has now obtained an interesting post as Secretary to Holland Martin Esq., Jnr., Overbury Court, Tewkesbury.

Miss Stella Dorrington gained the Diploma and Shield in May 1934, and obtained a junior position on the Staff of the Asiatic Petroleum Company.

Miss Marjorie Holmes, B.A., holder of the special Scholarship awarded to pupils of Clapham High School, gained her Diploma and Shield after seven months' training. She is now working in the Editorial Department of London Newspaper Services Ltd.

THE COLLEGE SHIELD.

SHIELDS GAINED SINCE OCTOBER 26th 1933.

(In alphabetical sequence).

Miss M Aitchison	Shorthand.....93	Miss E. Browning	Shorthand.....100
	Typewriting.....92		Typewriting.....94
	Book-keeping...99		Book-keeping...91
Miss B. M. Bailey	Shorthand.....98	Miss E. M. Chown	Shorthand.....90
	Typewriting.....97		Typewriting.....93
	Book-keeping..100		Book-keeping...93
Miss J. Blackburn	Shorthand.....95	Miss P. de Ste. Croix	Shorthand.....95
	Typewriting.....92		Typewriting.....92
	Book-keeping...98		Book-keeping...98
Miss J. Blackstone	Shorthand.....90	Miss R. E. G. Davison ..	Shorthand.....90
	Typewriting.....91		Typewriting.....91
	Book-keeping...98		Book-keeping...99
Miss E. J. Brown	Shorthand.....95	Miss E. E. Deverill	Shorthand.....99
	Typewriting.....91		Typewriting.....90
	Book-keeping...99		Book-keeping...98
		Miss S. E. Dorrington	Shorthand.....97
			Typewriting.....92
			Book-keeping...97

Miss B. E. Farmer	Shorthand.....96 Typewriting.....94 Book-keeping...99	Miss M. I. L. Paine	Shorthand.....95 Typewriting.....93 Book-keeping...96
Miss B. Flamen	Shorthand.....95 Typewriting.....91 Book-keeping...97	Miss E. W. Penton	Shorthand.....96 Typewriting.....90 Book-keeping...96
Miss H. M. Foucar	Shorthand.....90 Typewriting.....92 Book-keeping...99	Miss R. E. M. Perry	Shorthand.....97 Typewriting.....92 Book-keeping...98
Miss M. George, B.A.	Shorthand.....96 Typewriting.....90 Book-keeping...93	Miss B. M. Phillips	Shorthand.....93 Typewriting.....94 Book-keeping...97
Miss E. M. Harrison	Shorthand.....90 Typewriting.....96 Book-keeping...99	Miss P. Pryce	Shorthand.....90 Typewriting.....94 Book-keeping...97
Miss D. Hibble ..	Shorthand.....96 Typewriting.....90 Book-keeping...97	Miss M. M. Puddicombe ...	Shorthand.....91 Typewriting.....92 Book-keeping...96
Miss B. M. Hill ..	Shorthand.....99 Typewriting.....90 Book-keeping...95	Miss E. H. Rodd	Shorthand.....94 Typewriting.....91 Book-keeping...99
Miss M. M. Holmes, B.A. ..	Shorthand.....94 Typewriting.....91 Book-keeping...96	Miss J. M. Shaxby, M.A. ..	Shorthand.....90 Typewriting.....91 Book-keeping...100 B.Litt.]
Miss Y. Lattimer	Shorthand.....90 Typewriting.....93 Book-keeping...98	Miss O. M. Spiridon	Shorthand.....96 Typewriting.....90 Book-keeping...99
Miss E. B. Muscott.....	Shorthand.....90 Typewriting.....91 Book-keeping...95	Miss P. Turner	Shorthand.....99 Typewriting.....92 Book-keeping...94
Miss G. D. Nagele	Shorthand.....99 Typewriting.....92 Book-keeping...100	Miss K. M. L. Vivian	Shorthand.....94 Typewriting.....91 Book-keeping...97
Miss M. A. Nuttall	Shorthand.....91 Typewriting.....94 Book-keeping...98	Miss G. V. Warren	Shorthand.....98 Typewriting.....96 Book-keeping...99
Miss J. Organ ..	Shorthand.....93 Typewriting.....92 Book-keeping...90	Miss M. M. Williams	Shorthand.....91 Typewriting.....93 Book-keeping...93

St. James's Secretarial College,
34/35 Grosvenor Place, S.W.1.

December, 1934.

MY DEAR STUDENTS, PAST AND PRESENT,

Another year has passed quickly by, and I am happy to say it has been a very busy and successful one. Many students have trained during the year, and judging by the list of Diplomas and Shields gained, they have worked hard and trained well. It has been a great pleasure to welcome so large a number of new students this autumn, and I wish each one a very happy training.

I should like to remind present students that we must keep before us the College Motto "THOROUGH." We must always remember that the reputation of St. James's has been built up on that foundation, and each one must see to it that she attains a high standard of accuracy and neatness in all her work before she embarks upon her career.

As I said to those of you who were here at the beginning of the Autumn Term, I want to take the word SERVICE as our special slogan this year. Let us make it the keynote of all our work, and of our lives, both in College and out. No matter whether it is necessary or not for us to earn our livelihood—and I know how vitally necessary it is in many cases—our lives can always be dominated by a spirit of service. If we think of the real meaning of the word, and work primarily, not for money or for self-advancement, but for the "common weal", and especially for the good of those among whom our lot is cast, our lives cannot fail to be happy.

The College is at your service during your training. It is for you to get from it the very best that it can give. Each member of the Staff is at your service, anxious to help you to benefit by the training, so that you may be equipped and ready to render valuable service when you go out into the world. All this means work, and hard work, and good results can only be achieved by close co-operation between Staff and students. You, therefore, in your turn, can render service to the College by giving always of your best.

The Appointments Department is at your service throughout your career, and Miss MacDonald, our Appointments Secretary, is always glad to have the names of experienced "Jimmies" on the books so that she may help you to secure more responsible positions. It is the "Jimmies" in all parts of the world who carry on the fine tradition of the College, and we look to each one of you to uphold its reputation.

With every good wish for 1935,

Yours very sincerely,

(Signed) CICELY ABRAM.