

Campaigners and Elected Members: Female Activity in the Political
Arena in Bristol, 1877 –1914.

Joanna Wallis

BA History (University of London)

A dissertation submitted to The Open University for the degree of MA in History

January 2024

Word count: 15831

Abstract

This study considers the political activity of women in Bristol as campaigners for the Liberal and Conservative parties, and as elected members of Bristol's public boards. It covers the period from the election of the first woman to the Bristol School Board in 1877 to the start of the First World War. Using evidence from primary sources of women's activities, their areas of interest, their views on the questions of the day, and their links with each other, the study tests the hypothesis that though women could not vote in Parliamentary elections in this period, they were nevertheless able to take an active part in Bristol's political arena.

The study builds on previous historiography to offer a more detailed examination of women's political activities in Bristol in this period. It analyses the work of Bristol's Women's Liberal Associations showing that Association members overtly supported feminist causes such as women's suffrage and tried to inject a moral focus into public policy debates. It considers Conservative women's experience of the mixed sex Primrose League groups and identifies that while there were constraints on members' engagement with the development of policy, subsequent women-only Conservative groups allowed Bristol's Conservative women to campaign on issues of interest to them, such as women's suffrage and tariff reform. Elected women had the opportunity to promote progressive projects on the Bristol School Board, and through the city's Boards of Guardians. Where they were part of a board's majority group, they were able to progress their own strategic aims, but met barriers, particularly in the Boards of Guardians, from those seeking to restrict the spend of ratepayers' funding.

The study concludes that, as with similar other urban centres, women were active in the political arena in Bristol, despite the lack of a Parliamentary vote. They championed feminist causes and were part of the long suffragist campaign for women's political rights. During the period, they were able to take more public facing roles as public speakers, canvassers and leadership roles on boards' committees and their work demonstrated women's fitness to participate in an active public life.

Contents

Abstract		ii
Table of contents		iii
List of abbreviations		iv
Personal Statement		v
Chapter One	Introduction	1
Chapter Two	Bristol's Women's Liberal Associations, 1881-1914	5
Chapter Three	Conservative Women Activists, 1883-1914	21
Chapter Four	Elected Women, 1877-1914	38
Chapter Five	Conclusion	55
Bibliography		58

List of abbreviations

BA	Bristol Archives
BM	Bristol Mercury
BTM	Bristol Times and Mirror
Bristol WLAs	Bristol's Women's Liberal Associations
BRL BWLAR	Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Women's Liberal Association Reports
BSB	Bristol School Board
BWLA	Bristol Women's Liberal Association
BWoESS	Bristol and West of England Suffrage Society
BWTA	British Women's Temperance Association
CBCLC	Clifton Bristol and Counties Ladies Club Discussion Society
CS	Clifton Society
CUWFA	Conservative Unionist Women's Franchise Association
EBWLA	East Bristol Women's Liberal Association
LGC	Ladies Grand Council [of the Primrose League]
LSEWL	LSE Women's Library
NBWLA	North Bristol Women's Liberal Association
PLG	Primrose League Gazette
SBWLA	South Bristol Women's Liberal Association
TRL	Tariff Reform League
UBSC WLF	University of Bristol Special Collections, Women's Liberal Federation Archive
WBTRL	Women's Bristol Branch of the Tariff Reform League
WBWLA	West Bristol Women's Liberal Association
WCG	Women's Co-operative Guild
WDP	Western Daily Press
WLAs	Women's Liberal Associations
WLF	Women's Liberal Federation
WNLA	Women's National Liberal Association

Names of the subjects of the study: for the first mention of a personal name, first and last names are used (where known). Subsequent references are to last names only.

Personal Statement

I declare that this dissertation is my own, unaided work and that I have not submitted it, or any part of it, for a degree at The Open University or at any other university or institution. Parts of this dissertation are built on work I submitted for assessment as part of A825, especially in Chapter Four.

Chapter One: Introduction

Although Bristol women could not vote in Parliamentary elections in the period 1877-1914, this did not exclude them from engaging in local political activity, through new party-political organisations such as the Primrose League groups (called habitations) and the Women's Liberal Associations (WLAs). Furthermore, they could act in the broader political realm as elected members of local public bodies, including the city's Boards of Guardians, and its newly established School Board.

This study examines the extent to which women were actively engaged in these political activities in Bristol, 1877-1914, by considering the political organisations and activities the Bristol women engaged in, including the differences and similarities between them. It considers what issues interested these women and how far their own voices and their own perspectives on the issues of the day can be identified. It explores the extent to which they were linked by class, and shared participation in social, religious, and political networks, and whether this facilitated their participation in political activity.

The study period begins in 1877 when the first woman was elected to the Bristol School Board (BSB) and ends at the start of the First World War, when normal political activity was diverted to war service. It encompasses the foundation of the city's WLAs from 1881, the inclusion of women in Primrose League habitations from

1884, and the election of female guardians from 1882.¹ Bristol in this period was a wealthy port city, with an influential merchant elite predominantly based in its wealthy middle-class suburbs of Clifton and Redland. Following the 1869 extension of the municipal franchise which allowed single women ratepayers to vote in local elections, there were 3544 female municipal electors by 1884, about thirteen percent of the total municipal electorate, many of whom lived in these districts.² Bristol was a centre of campaigning for women's suffrage and other feminist causes, with a tradition of 'philanthropic nonconformity'.³

Historians have considered women's political activity of this period through themes including feminism, separate spheres and the Parliamentary franchise. Levine describes a 'conscious grouping' of feminist women whose activities 'clustered around' aspirations for women's 'self-determination' in a gendered society.⁴ Hirshfield argues for the existence of two 'contradictory traditions' in feminism whereby women's claims to a special role to 'improve the moral health of the nation' contradicted demands for full equality of participation.⁵ Hollis suggests that women's elected service built on their existing philanthropic work in education and welfare and Holton argues that the expansion of public policy into areas formerly understood to be women's domestic 'preserve' such as education and welfare enabled women to

¹ Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Women's Liberal Association Reports, 1882-1904 (BRL BWLAR), 34147, Annual Report 1882; Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p.233.

² David Large, *The Municipal Government of Bristol 1851-1901* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1999), pp.2-3.

³ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.129.

⁴ P. Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), pp.1-2.

⁵ Claire Hirshfield, 'Fractured faith: Liberal party women and the suffrage issue in Britain, 1892 -1914' in *Gender and History*, 2 (1990), 173-97 (pp.191-2).

challenge the idea of women's lives being separate from the public sphere.⁶ As party-political volunteers, women became canvassers and electoral workers, often for male candidates, but as Walker's comparative study of the Primrose League and the WLAs shows, while they encouraged women's labour, parties were ambivalent on the question of women's suffrage.⁷ Hirshfield argues that Liberal women's frustrations over the failure of Liberal leaders to deliver women's suffrage were a 'classic conflict between feminism and party loyalty'.⁸ It led to schisms at national level for the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF) and had local repercussions. By contrast, Conservative women in their Primrose League service did not attempt to use their political service to push forward feminist claims, which Walker describes as postponing 'the day of equality'.⁹ This study aims to contribute to this historiography through a closer study of Bristol, to complement and add to existing local studies such as Hannam and Martin's survey of women's lives in Bristol in the nineteenth century, and Hannam's own work, which acknowledges that understanding of women's political work in Bristol in this period remains 'fragmentary'.¹⁰

The hypothesis tested through this project is that, although Bristol's women were not able to vote in Parliamentary elections, many were able to take an active part in

⁶ Patricia Hollis, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space,' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.192-213 (p.194); Sandra Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p.15.

⁷ Linda Walker 'Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890 – 1914' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.165-191.

⁸ Hirshfield, p.189.

⁹ Walker, p.191.

¹⁰ June Hannam and Moria Martin, 'Women in Bristol 1835-1914' in *Women and the City Bristol 1373-2000*, ed. by Madge Dresser (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2016), pp.92 – 135; June Hannam, ' "An Enlarged Sphere of Usefulness": the Bristol Women's Movement, c1860-1914,' in *The Making of Modern Bristol* ed. by Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp.184-209 (p.184).

political organisations and to champion their own political causes. The methodology was to focus on two groups of party-political women: Liberals and Conservatives, followed by an example of women's political action via elected service on the city's local boards. The availability of relevant primary sources influenced the choice of groups to ensure there was sufficient detail for a qualitative analysis of women's activities, the issues of interest to them and the ways they linked together in social and political networks. Comparison was also made with other urban centres such as Glasgow and Merseyside, plus the counties of Surrey and Sussex, through other regional studies. Primary sources include official records such as minute books, annual reports and organisational periodicals. These sources evidence women's voting records, the extent to which they proposed and seconded amendments, and their opportunities to lead work in committee and local group activity. They are a rich source of information but as they represent the official voice of each organisation, they may obscure individual women's participation. Minute books of voluntary groups evidence organisational arrangements but their usefulness relies on the volunteer secretary being skilled at compiling minutes and doing so consistently for each meeting. Bristol's main local newspapers all carried reports of local board meetings that can be compared against the official record to fill in gaps in minute books. They also covered political meetings including who attended and the speeches made, but represent selections made by the newspaper to fit its own political standpoint. For all of these sources, the voices most likely to be recorded were those in leadership positions or, like the Poor Law Guardian Mary Clifford, were well known in the city.

Chapter Two: Bristol's Women's Liberal Associations, 1881-1914

This chapter considers the engagement of women in the Bristol Women's Liberal Associations (Bristol WLAs) and will focus on the years from 1881 when the first Bristol WLA was founded as a women-only organisation. The chapter argues that women sympathetic to Liberal politics were able to take an active part in the WLAs, with opportunities for the most committed to speak in public, to undertake electoral work and to seek to influence outside bodies such as the local men's Liberals' organisations and the national umbrella organisation for WLAs, the Women's Liberal Federation (WLF). Their aim was to 'promote Liberal principles' but that did not mean unqualified support for the Liberal Party.¹ The chapter will consider some of the issues they engaged in, using the primary sources to evidence their own perspectives on these issues, and will trace familial and other links between key members.

Walker shows how the WLAs enabled women to move from tacit support within the traditional domestic sphere to public support of Liberalism, using the associations to educate themselves on political questions and raise consciousness of how existing laws impacted women and their families.² Local studies have also examined women's active roles in Liberalism. Smitley examines women's Liberalism in

¹ Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Women's Liberal Association Reports, 1882-1904 (BRL BWLAR), 34147, Annual Report 1882.

² Linda Walker, 'Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890 – 1914' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.165-191 (pp.177-8).

Scotland through the prism of temperance campaigning and her description of 'a vigorous community of public-spirited women' could also apply to Bristol WLA members.³ Hannam's survey of the Bristol women's movement of this period emphasises the links between the Bristol Women's Liberal Association (BWLA)'s founding members and the Bristol suffrage campaign.⁴ These historians all seek to show that women of this period, who were politically active as Liberals, were concerned with how women could gain their own agency and use it to improve lives and bring a moral dimension to political questions, which Levine sees as a feminist re-definition of the political sphere.⁵ This study shows that the Bristol's WLAs provide evidence to support this argument.

Bristol's WLAs and their sources

The BWLA was one of the first WLAs to be founded, in 1881, and as with the WLF which was established in 1886, it was specifically women-only and autonomous from the Liberal Party structure.⁶ It went through a number of iterations, which were partly attempts to improve its electoral work by concentrating it in smaller groups, but also to match changed city Parliamentary constituencies.⁷ A Bristol North branch (NBWLA) was founded in 1888, originally as a sub-set of the BWLA, but from 1891, as a free standing organisation alongside additional Associations for South (SBWLA)

³ Megan Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere: Middle-class Women and Civic Life in Scotland, c.1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p.19.

⁴ June Hannam, ' "An Enlarged Sphere of Usefulness": the Bristol Women's Movement, c1860-1914' in *The Making of Modern Bristol* eds Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp.184-209 (p.196).

⁵ P Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p.3.

⁶ Claire Hirshfield, 'Fractured faith: Liberal party women and the suffrage issue in Britain, 1892 -1914' in *Gender and History*, 2 (1990), 173-97 (p.176).

⁷ David Large, *The Municipal Government of Bristol 1851-1901* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1999), pp.29-30.

and East (EBWLA), with the original BWLA becoming West (WBWLA).⁸ This pattern of reorganisation to meet electoral requirements can also be seen in the formation of Welsh WLAs.⁹ The BWLA was among the first to join the WLF along with twenty-five other associations, including, for example, Liverpool.¹⁰ The subsequent Bristol WLAs also joined the WLF, but this research has not traced any links to the Women's National Liberal Association (WNLA), the body created when the WLF split in 1892 on the question of what priority should be given to campaigning for women's suffrage.¹¹ This contrasts with Liverpool which did have a WNLA branch by 1893.¹²

There are several primary sources for the Bristol WLAs including a single volume of the BWLA/WBWLA annual reports (1881-1904) and a manuscript minute book from a ward committee linked to the WBWLA.¹³ In addition, the papers of the WLF report activities of the later Bristol WLAs, and also document the activities of Bristol WLA members at national level. As noted in Chapter One, Bristol's newspapers covered the Associations' public or annual meetings. Although this is a comprehensive set of records, there are some caveats. Other than brief references to them in the WLF reports, and some newspaper reports, there is little evidence relating to most of the Bristol WLAs, other than BWLA/WBWLA. Also, the corporate wording of the BWLA/WBWLA annual reports can obscure tensions. Finally, as noted above, the local press coverage is influenced by each paper's own political interests and, as

⁸ BRL BWLAR, 34147, Annual Reports 1888, 1891.

⁹ Ursula Masson, 'For women, for Wales and for Liberalism': women in Liberal politics in Wales c. 1883-1914 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the West of England, Bristol, 2007), p.40.

¹⁰ BRL BWLAR, 34147, Annual Report, 1886; Krista Cowman, *Mrs Brown is a man and a brother: women in Merseyside's political organisations, 1890-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), pp.40-64, (p.45).

¹¹ Hirshfield, p.177.

¹² Cowman, p.46.

¹³ BRL BWLAR, 34147; Bristol Archives (BA); 44277/1, Minute book of the West Bristol Women's Liberal Association 1904-1919.

Masson found in her survey of Welsh WLAs, there are complexities in identifying the messages which meeting organisers had intended to convey rather than what the press chose to publish.¹⁴ The primary sources can also be used to identify the women's own voices and evidence their own perspectives on the issues they considered. For example, from 1891 the BWLA/WBWLA annual reports have verbatim accounts of its President, Anna Maria Priestman's, addresses. The WLF annual council meeting reports also contain many verbatim reports of speeches, which are useful for considering Bristol WLA members, such as Annie Martin and Louisa Swann, who were frequent attendees and speakers. However, it should be noted that the voices most likely to be recorded are those most active in these organisations, often in leadership roles.

The main activities of the Bristol WLAs

The BWLA/WBWLA annual reports usually reported on two or three public meetings each year, plus some smaller scale drawing room meetings in a member's home. Each meeting comprised a talk, with a vote on a resolution. Members' active participation varied. The private meetings were an opportunity for a member to read a paper which they had written. However, larger scale events were likely to be more passive for members, particularly if there were outside speakers, including male speakers from the National Reform League, or if the meeting was chaired by a local male Liberal, rather than a Committee member. But, some Bristol WLA members, like Martin, were good examples of how WLAs enabled women to redefine public

¹⁴ Masson, p.6.

discourse by becoming accomplished public speakers; her Census entry for 1911 records an occupation for her as 'Lecturer in political subjects'.¹⁵

Electoral work was part of the Associations' activities, and from its inception the BWLA canvassed those householder women who could vote in municipal and school board elections. Wider General Election work began after the Corrupt Practices Act (1884) ended the employment of paid election canvassers. This encouraged all political organisations, including the Liberals, to seek volunteer female election workers, although as Walker notes, this was expediency rather than an acceptance of women's claims to their own Parliamentary vote.¹⁶ Each BWLA/WBWL annual report summarised that year's election work, showing that it was important to the Association, but also time consuming and heavily reliant on a small number of people. For example, Maria Colby worked between 1894 and 1902 to assist the male Liberal agents with the annual registration revision and was instrumental in protecting women's places on the register against objections to their householder status.¹⁷ Canvassing too relied on a small number of helpers, usually Committee members, and the annual reports generally included appeals for more members to be involved. For example, in 1891, the report noted that there was a 'great need' for the visiting of women householders.¹⁸ This shows that an active minority supported electoral work, but the majority of members did not take part in such work, which is

¹⁵ Census for England and Wales 1911: Bristol, RG14/14917.

¹⁶ Walker, 'Party Political Women', p.165.

¹⁷ Large, p. 3; BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Reports 1894-1902.

¹⁸ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1891.

similar to Cowman's analysis of Liverpool that some women were keen to take part in election work, but others preferred to stay out of 'public view'.¹⁹

Helen Blackburn, discussing the WLAs independence from male Liberal organisations, notes that only a few women were admitted to the male bastions 'here and there'.²⁰ She may have been alluding to Bristol, which she knew well, where women from Bristol WLAs were able to take part in the local male organisations. Priestman and Emily Sturge represented the BWLA on the Executive of the Bristol Liberal Association in 1884.²¹ Other women can be seen actively involved with an official party group, the Bristol Liberal Thousand, including Swann who moved, and spoke on, a motion at its annual meeting in 1894, congratulating the then Liberal Government on its work.²² This aligns with Hannam's view that Bristol's male Liberals were progressives, supportive of women's rights, and had close links to the Bristol WLAs.²³ There was also strong engagement by Bristol WLAs with the WLF. Representatives attended and spoke at WLF meetings. For example, Mary-Ann Trebilco, of EBWLA, spoke on and seconded a motion on the work of Boards of Guardians in 1894.²⁴ Priestman and Swann both served on the WLF Executive Committee and Martin, who spoke at many annual meetings on behalf of the South Bristol WLAs, became a WLF organiser for the Southwest in 1911.²⁵

¹⁹ Cowman, p.48.

²⁰ H Blackburn, *Women's Suffrage: A record of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the British Isles* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1902), p.171-2.

²¹ BRL BWLAR, 34147, BWLA Annual Report 1884.

²² *Bristol Mercury* (BM), 23 April 1894.

²³ Hannam, 'Enlarged Sphere', p.197.

²⁴ University of Bristol Special Collections, Women's Liberal Federation Archive (UBSC WLF), DM1193/4/1/1, Women's Liberal Federation Annual Reports and Council Meetings (WLF Reports), 1888-1913, Report of Council Meeting 1-3 May 1894.

²⁵ UBSC WLF, DM1193/4/1/5, WLF Reports, 24th Annual Report of the Executive Committee, 1911.

The sources show members engaging strongly with the Associations in local meetings, through local campaigning and by representing their Associations in other Liberal bodies. However, they also show that these women were an active and, as Smitley suggests, a public-spirited minority of the members with evidence from the BWLA/WBWLAs annual reports of frustration that more members are not actively engaged.

Issues of interest to Bristol's women Liberals

The Bristol WLAs had an Object in their constitutions committing them to the promotion of Liberal principles. The next section considers what this meant to the women by examining some brief examples of the issues considered at the Associations' meetings including Ireland, temperance, and women as paid workers, starting with a more detailed examination of women's suffrage.

Historians have suggested a strong link between the founding of the BWLA and the campaign for women's suffrage. Crawford's view is that the Association was intended to put pressure on the Liberal party to make more progress.²⁶ Holton suggests that Priestman, a founder member, was disillusioned with the Party's approach to female suffrage.²⁷ Priestman herself, in an 1896 interview, confirmed that she, Sturge 'and others' had set up BWLA, after the successful Bristol iteration

²⁶ Elizabeth Crawford, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), p.131.

²⁷ Sandra Stanley Holton, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996), p.57.

of the pro-suffrage 'Demonstration of Women' meetings held in 1880, determined, she says, not to work for any Liberal candidate not in favour of 'equal laws for men and women'.²⁸ Therefore, the founders of the first Bristol WLA saw women's suffrage as fundamental to Liberal principles and intended to use the Association as a vehicle to pursue women's suffrage within Liberalism, as evidenced through the diligent campaign reports in each year's annual report. For example, in 1883, on the retirement of a Liberal MP, the BWLA expressed the 'earnest hope' that the Bristol Liberal Association would choose a candidate who would be in favour of 'political equality' for both sexes.²⁹ From 1890 evidence from the annual reports shows that the Bristol Associations used a test question to check that municipal candidates were in favour of women's suffrage before they worked on the candidates' behalf.³⁰ But, as Cowman's research into Liverpool's municipal candidates demonstrates, nothing prevented candidates making promises that they knew they would not have to keep.³¹ The BWLA also became strongly associated with efforts to persuade the WLF that it too should campaign proactively for women's suffrage, by proposing and supporting resolutions to that effect.³² It issued a pamphlet aimed at the WLF in 1891, signed by Priestman and the Honorary Secretaries, which claimed the Parliamentary vote was the key to success for all women's causes, noting that 'with two strokes of the pen' women could do more than by 'years of toil'.³³

²⁸ S. A. Tooley, *Ladies of Bristol and Clifton* (1896), p.453; Blackburn, p.153-4.

²⁹ BRL BWLAR, 34147, BWLA Annual Report, 1883.

³⁰ For example, BRL BWLAR, 34147, Annual Reports, NBWLA, 1890 and WBWLA 1892.

³¹ Cowman, p.50.

³² BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1892.

³³ LSE Women's Library (LSEWL) PC/06/396-11/07, UDC Pamphlet Collection: Suffrage Pamphlets, 1872-1913, 'To the Members of the Women's Liberal Federation'.

However, just as had happened with the earlier split of the WLF and establishment of the WNLA, tensions later developed over this approach, with suggestions that suffrage was overshadowing other issues.³⁴ By 1905 a new generation of Bristolian Liberal women held different, but equally robust, views on the use of the test question, and both Crawford and Holton argue that Priestman was ousted from the Presidency as a result.³⁵ Yet the WBWLA annual reports convey a more nuanced picture, suggesting that in stepping down from the Presidency in January 1905, Priestman was fulfilling a decision made the previous year that, aged 76 years, she would serve only one further year.³⁶ Nevertheless, within a few months, open conflict had broken out between the new and old regimes. The new President, Edith Lennard, publicly opposed the use of the test question and claimed that suffrage had previously been pursued to the exclusion of all else.³⁷ The dispute is an example of how women's own opinions can be identified as it was conducted through the letters pages of the Bristol papers.³⁸ Lennard complained of 'open defiance' to her authority as President, by a 'small autocratic committee within a committee', and claimed that members were made to feel unwelcome if 'they did not press Women's Suffrage in every conceivable way'.³⁹ Priestman, with thirteen others, refuted these points and affirmed that the WBWLA welcomed 'all Liberal women into its ranks'.⁴⁰ The Priestman regime contended that a Parliamentary vote would give women agency in the creation of legislation that affected them and therefore suffrage should be at the

³⁴ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA annual report 1892, Annual Meeting Report 1893.

³⁵ Crawford, p.131; Holton, *Suffrage Days*, p.165.

³⁶ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1903, Annual Meeting Report 1904; Census 1901: Bristol, RG13/2370.

³⁷ *Western Daily Press* (WDP), 16 May 1905.

³⁸ See also WDP 17 May 1905, *Bristol Times and Mirror* (BTM) 24 May 1905, BTM 8 June 1905, WDP 15 September 1905.

³⁹ WDP 25 May 1905.

⁴⁰ WDP, 29 May 1905.

heart of the Association's work. But, Lennard, as the wife of the West Bristol Liberal Parliamentary candidate, was much closer to the new generation of local male leaders who were less sympathetic to feminist opinion, and her faction prevailed at an extraordinary meeting of the WBWLA.⁴¹ The dispute shows the importance of the women's suffrage issue within the BWLA/WBWLA but also its potential to trigger conflict. Other WLAs faced similar tensions, for example Cardiff where, in 1910, an anti-suffragist Parliamentary candidate was put forward, which led to the eventual break-up of the WLA.⁴² As Hirshfield has documented, these tensions between party loyalty and feminist hopes for the Parliamentary vote were also mirrored at national level at the WLF.⁴³

Another example of a topic on which Liberal women were active participants in policy debate was Ireland. While tensions over Gladstone's policy of Home Rule for Ireland impacted the BWLA, with the resignation of some members, those who remained were energised by the plight of Irish families, with large attendance at a series of lectures on Ireland in 1889, and resolutions against the Conservative Government's coercive measures to quell protests in Ireland.⁴⁴ This is consistent with Walker's suggestion that this spurred the establishment of new WLAs to campaign for redress of Irish grievances.⁴⁵ Under Swann's Presidency, NBWLA made clothes to send to women and children in Ireland after the failure of the potato crop.⁴⁶ These efforts provide evidence of the women's approach to the issue as a moral argument, one

⁴¹ Hannam, 'Enlarged Sphere', pp. 200-201; WDP 30 May 1905.

⁴² Masson, pp.222-226.

⁴³ Hirshfield, pp.180-189.

⁴⁴ BRL BWLAR, 34147, BWLA Annual Report 1889.

⁴⁵ Linda Walker, 'Gender, Suffrage and Party: Liberal Women's Organisations 1880-1914' in *Suffrage Outside Suffragism*, ed by Myriam Boussahba-Bravard (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.78-101, (p.82).

⁴⁶ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1891, North Bristol report.

about protecting families, and giving them self-determination over their own lives. But it also highlights how closely women's political work was entwined with their philanthropic action.⁴⁷

Temperance can also be evidenced as an issue of interest for the Bristol WLA members. For example, Priestman, alongside other BWLA members, was a member of the British Women's Temperance Association (BWTA).⁴⁸ Temperance was a frequent subject of WLA lectures and the 1893 WBWLA annual report described a campaign to promote the Local Veto Bill, which would have helped ratepayers to prohibit licensed premises in their districts. The report highlights the collection of petition signatures from passers-by at Durdham Down attracting signatures from many women who 'crowded eagerly around the petition table'.⁴⁹ This supports Barrow's argument that temperance campaigning was 'endemic amongst the non-conformist middle class'.⁵⁰ Bristol was not unique – in Scotland Smitley identified similar links between Liberalism, temperance and women's rights.⁵¹ Again, this was a moral and philanthropic argument. Temperance campaigners were motivated by their faith, but also what they saw as the middle class's duty to public service, with a particular 'responsibility' towards women drinkers.⁵²

⁴⁷ June Hannam, 'Women in Politics', in Purvis, June, ed, *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945: an Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1995), pp.217-245 (p.221).

⁴⁸ WDP, 21 January 1891.

⁴⁹ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report, 1893.

⁵⁰ Margaret Barrow, 'Teetotal Feminists: Temperance Leadership and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage' in *A Suffrage Reader: Charting Directions in British Suffrage History*, ed. by Claire Eustance and others (London: Leicester University Press, 2000), p.69.

⁵¹ Smitley, p.19.

⁵² Smitley, p.44.

The final issue to be considered here is women as workers. The WBWLA Annual Meeting held in 1900 had a speaker, Mrs Gwyneth, on the condition of women's labour, who criticised legal restrictions which reduced their wages and 'closed several fields of employment' to women. In thanking the speaker, Priestman acknowledged differences of opinion among WBWLA members on this question.⁵³

The difference concerned protective legislation for women working in dangerous industries and the extent to which such measures restricted their opportunities to work.⁵⁴ Blackburn, who was an influential suffragist in Bristol and nationally, and also a BWLA member from its inception, also campaigned against protective legislation, arguing that, as Walker suggests, it put women at an economic disadvantage, and in particular challenged their 'self-reliance and self-respect'.⁵⁵

However, this view was increasingly challenged by the end of the nineteenth century with a greater understanding that legislation could assist women in the sweated industries, for example, by promoting a minimum wage.⁵⁶ But, other than Priestman's comment above, this change of emphasis is not directly reflected in the primary sources for the Bristol WLAs, which may indicate that these women, like Blackburn, held fast against protective legislation. Certainly, Martin, who was also an officer in the Bedminster Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG), remained clear in her view that protection was being used to limit women's paid work.⁵⁷ She lived in

⁵³ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1899, Report of Annual Meeting 1900.

⁵⁴ Walker, 'Gender, Suffrage and Party', p.90.

⁵⁵ BRL BWLAR, 34147, BWLA Annual Report 1882; Linda Walker, 'Helen Blackburn', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁵⁶ Sandra Holton, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002), p.23-24.

⁵⁷ Edward Jackson, *A Study in Democracy: Being An Account of the Rise and Progress of Industrial Co-Operation in Bristol* (Manchester: Co-operative Wholesale Society's Printing Works, 1911), p.514.

Bedminster and was married to a clerk in a smelting works.⁵⁸ She was not a member of the Clifton elite of wealthy householder women and, while she was active in many campaigns, notably women's suffrage, working women was a recurrent theme of her talks. Her opinions challenge the idea of women remaining in a wholly domestic sphere, and support those, like herself, who were in public life and earning their own wage. For example, at the WLF Annual Meeting in 1893, she was one of the promoters of a successful motion against restraint on women's work 'until the opinion of women themselves has been ascertained in each case'.⁵⁹ For the WBWLA she gave a paper in 1903 called 'The Hours of Women Should Not Be Restricted By Law'.⁶⁰ She accepted that some regulation was needed, urging the legal prohibition of yellow phosphorous in matchmaking, but she stressed that women should have their own agency over these decisions.⁶¹

This section has analysed some of the issues which the Bristol women Liberals chose to engage with. Active members were able to take part in detailed policy debates, and though they expressed support for Liberal Governments, they did not do so uncritically. Their interests could generate robust debate, which had the potential to cause damaging splits, but they were also linked through ideas that women should have agency over their own lives, and that there should be a moral dimension in Liberal politics. A member proposing a vote of thanks at a WBWLA meeting in 1894 said that 'the duty of women as politicians was to set forth the ethical side of politics'.⁶² The women were creating their own idea of Liberalism with

⁵⁸ Census 1901: Bristol, RG13/2358.

⁵⁹ UBSC WLF, DM1193/4/1/1, Annual Meeting Report 1893.

⁶⁰ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1903.

⁶¹ UBSC WLF, DM1193/4/1/3, Annual Meeting Report 1903.

⁶² BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1893, Annual Meeting Report 1894.

a moral focus. As the WBWLA Committee reiterated in 1894, women must be 'comrades not tools of the Liberal party'.⁶³

Kinship and campaign networks

The next section considers to what extent Bristol's women Liberals were linked in ways other than through the WLAs, and how this influenced their activities in the Associations. Cowman argues that existing friendship and kinship links boosted the establishment of WLAs by Liberal women in Liverpool.⁶⁴ In Bristol the evidence shows that the Liberal women were also closely linked in similar ways. It was not unusual for the women of a Liberal family to join a Bristol WLA, while the male family members were in the male local Liberal organisations. For example, Mark Whitwill was a member of the Liberal 250 of Bristol South in 1888, while his daughter served on the WBWLA committee in 1891 as its Assistant Honorary Secretary.⁶⁵ There were also a number of sisters such as Margaret Tanner and her sisters Anna-Maria and Mary Priestman, and the Sturges: Emily and Helen. There were also husband and wife partnerships, such as the Lennards, which indicate that it was an expected part of being the candidate's wife to engage with the local political organisation, and indeed that female family members were widely associated with constituency WLAs, as Hirshfield has argued.⁶⁶ Some women also had religious links through their families, which were usually non-Anglican. For example, both the Priestman and the Sturge families were Quaker.⁶⁷ Levine argues that family was the mechanism

⁶³ BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1894.

⁶⁴ Cowman, p.45.

⁶⁵ WDP, 11 December 1888, BRL BWLAR, 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1891.

⁶⁶ Hirshfield, p.175.

⁶⁷ Levine, p.28.

through which these women's lives were 'ordered and contained'.⁶⁸ It is not therefore surprising that this should have influenced their choices to become active Liberals.

Women in the Bristol WLAs were also linked through other campaign groups. Predictably, there is an overlap with suffrage campaigners in the city. The 1878 Bristol and West of England Suffrage Society's (BWoESS) Annual report's list of its supporters includes many who were also involved in the BWLA, including the BWLA's founders.⁶⁹ However, by 1912, this link had weakened as suffrage organisations became more frustrated with the Liberal Party's failure to deliver women's Parliamentary suffrage.⁷⁰ But, suffrage was not the only campaign which bound these women together. For example, Priestman and her sisters were heavily involved in the campaign against the Contagious Diseases Act through their friendship with Josephine Butler, and as noted above the BWLA/WBwLA members campaigned on issues related to temperance.⁷¹ Bristol's women's complex links across multiple associations compares with Smitley's findings for Glasgow and Edinburgh of 'cross-membership' between temperance and suffrage organisations and the Scottish Women's Liberal Federation.⁷² The complexity, and collaborative working, across Bristol's campaign groups can be evidenced through an open letter sent to the Prime Minister in November 1907 in favour of women's suffrage, with signatories from the BWoESS, six officers of Bristol WLAs, and six officers of local

⁶⁸ Levine, p.29.

⁶⁹ LSEWL 2BWS, Records of the Bristol and West of England Society for Women's Suffrage, 1867-1910, Annual Report 1878.

⁷⁰ Holton, *Feminism and Democracy*, pp.73-4.

⁷¹ June Hannam and Moria Martin, 'Women in Bristol 1835-1914' in *Women and the City Bristol 1373-2000*, ed. by Madge Dresser (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2016), pp. 92 – 135, (p.104).

⁷² Smitley, p.35.

BTWAs.⁷³ The women were able to work together in this way because they formed a community of shared values, with links across family, religion and other campaign groups. The campaigns had similar themes of equal and fair treatment for women, particularly on moral issues, and in favour of them having agency in their own lives and support for these ideas can also be evidenced in the work of the Bristol WLAs.

In summary, women with Liberal party sympathies had the opportunity to actively engage in the political life of Bristol. Many were motivated by their desire to persuade the national Liberal Party leadership to pursue the cause of women's Parliamentary suffrage, but there were other feminist campaigns linked through a desire for political decisions to be influenced by moral arguments. The women engaged in detailed policy discussion and those whose own opinions are most visible were those putting forward political ideas through speeches at public meetings, writing pamphlets and engagement with the men's associations and the WLF. However, many women were content to do no more than attend talks and there are indications of some struggles to encourage electoral activity such as canvassing. There were conflicts and disagreements, which led to the loss of key members, including the Priestman sisters, but others such as Swann and Martin served the cause of Liberalism across the whole period and in 1914 remained fully engaged in the cause.

⁷³ WDP, 13 November 1907.

Chapter Three: Conservative Women Activists, 1883-1914

This chapter considers the engagement of women in Bristol's Conservative political organisations, 1883-1914. It argues that women were influential in the growth of the Primrose League in the city and were later active in the Bristol branches of the Conservative single issue campaign groups, such as the Conservative Unionist Women's Franchise Association (CUWFA) and the women's tariff reform groups. The Primrose League was set up in 1883 with the aim of building support for Conservative values through local habitations and from 1884, it allowed women, as well as men, to become members. The League emphasised that it was not part of the Conservative party, yet it consistently supported Conservative governments and campaigned only for Conservative candidates.¹ As Robb notes, women 'flocked' to become members in its heyday of the 1880s and 1890s and it is therefore a useful organisation to study to understand the involvement of women in Conservative politics.² The chapter will argue that Bristol women were encouraged to attend League meetings, to be active as canvassers and event organisers, with some women becoming leaders and public speakers, such as Mabel Hill, who achieved considerable public recognition for her organisation and speechmaking. Such contributions were not comparable to the 'muscular' activities of the WLAs as the Primrose League hierarchy sought to steer local habitations away from debates

¹ Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People: 1880-1935* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985), p.38.

² Janet Robb, *The Primrose League, 1883-1906* (New York, 1942), p.112.

which might risk splits, such as women's suffrage.³ Yet, in the Edwardian period, there is evidence of Bristol's Conservative women actively debating topical issues, just as the WLA women did, at the Clifton Bristol and Counties Ladies Club Discussion Society (CBCLC) and also leading local branches of the CUWFA and tariff reform groups. And, as with the WLA members, the chapter shows that familial and campaign links influenced women's political activity. Finally, the chapter will highlight that, although some women such as Hill, were visible in the public record via newspaper reports, it can be hard to identify the women's specific contributions as distinct from their male colleagues.

In 1985, Pugh highlighted a dearth of historiography on the Primrose League, with much reliance placed on Robb's 1942 monograph.⁴ While more historians have since considered this area, it remains relatively neglected in historians' consideration of the feminist movements of this period. This is not surprising as the Primrose League itself consistently downplayed the progressive nature of women's roles in the League, which Vervaecke suggests both 'promoted and circumscribed' their political activity.⁵ Yet, Maguire emphasises that while 'protesting' that their work had no such overtones, the League 'revolutionized' the role of women in politics.⁶ Pugh and Walker both also show that women's roles as League members and election workers did enable acceptance of women into Conservative political life.⁷ This demonstrates

³ Linda Walker, 'Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890 – 1914' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.165-191 (p.178).

⁴ Pugh, p.2.

⁵ Philippe Vervaecke, 'The Primrose League and Women's Suffrage, 1883-1918' in *Suffrage Outside Suffragism* ed. by Myriam Boussahba-Bravard. (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.180-201, (p.182).

⁶ Maguire, G.E., *Conservative Women: A History of Women and the Conservative Party 1874-1997* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp.1-65, (p.32).

⁷ Walker, 'Party Political Women', p. 179; Pugh, *Tories and the People*, p.43.

a consensus amongst recent historians that, while they prioritised duty to the Conservative party over feminist issues, women members of the Primrose League assisted the gradual breakdown of the idea of women's separate domestic sphere. Local studies are adding to the picture of Conservative women's political activity, including Jesman's extensive study of women's Conservative activity in Surrey and Sussex.⁸ Cowman has also considered Merseyside, where she suggests the League struggled to establish long-lived habitations despite the Conservative party's local electoral success.⁹ In comparison, Bristol has very little historiographical coverage. Neither Malos nor Hannam cover the Primrose League in their surveys of feminist history in Bristol, although Hannam and Martin's general survey of women's history in Bristol contains three brief mentions of Conservative women.¹⁰ However, this study shows that Conservative women in Bristol deserve greater focus with evidence that these women, though not avowedly feminist, were able to move into public life and to campaign for their chosen causes, including women's suffrage.

Bristol Primrose League habitations and their sources

Pugh uses reports in local newspapers and *The Primrose League Gazette* (PLG) to identify twenty-four Primrose League habitations in Bristol.¹¹ These reports describe meetings in terms of the entertainments, the prominent citizens present and the main speeches, which can obscure the contribution of women, if they are not named or do not make a speech. However, as with the WLAs, where women are in leadership

⁸ Christine Margaret Jesman, *Conservative women, the Primrose league and public activity in Surrey and Sussex, C. 1880 – 1902* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2008).

⁹ Cowman, p.43.

¹⁰ Ellen Malos, 'Bristol Women in Action, 1839-1919', in *Bristol's Other History*, ed. by I Bild, (Bristol: Bristol BroadSides, 1983), pp.97-128; Hannam, 'Enlarged Sphere of Usefulness'; Hannam and Martin, p.116, 127.

¹¹ Pugh, pp.218-9.

positions, the newspaper reports can evidence women's own voices through accounts of their speeches. Newspaper and PLG reports have been used to analyse the activity of two habitations which had women in leadership roles. The Bedminster habitation, in South Bristol, was led from 1890-1896 by Hill as Ruling Councillor.¹² She successfully grew the membership in the early 1890s, despite the area being seen as one of strength for the Liberals (with an active WLA), and her success meant that her tenure was well covered in the media.¹³ The Colston, later the Clifton-Colston habitation after a merger in 1908, had several key female members, whose activities are recorded in newspaper reports. There is also a manuscript minute book (1905-1921) for this habitation, providing evidence of these women's roles on its Executive Committee.¹⁴ The book concentrates on arrangements for, and reports of, habitation and public meetings. However, as with newspaper reports, it records what each Secretary considered important and may not be a full account of the habitation's work. Additionally, the minute book of the CBCLC, 1908-1914, has been used as a source for women's political interests outside of the Primrose League.¹⁵ The discussion society met fortnightly during the winter with talks on a wide range of literary and scientific subjects plus debates on topical motions. Some of the names listed as speakers, attendees or committee members are Clifton-Colston habitation members, such as Amy Green-Armytage, and Anna Gronow-Davis.¹⁶ While the minute book provides useful insight into the topics chosen for discussion, who spoke and the outcome of the vote, it does not give details of speeches. It is also apparent that some men attended the meetings,

¹² *Bristol Times and Mirror* (BTM), 27 February 1890 and 5 February 1896.

¹³ Pugh, p.99.

¹⁴ Bristol Archives (BA), 46273, Records of the Clifton Colston habitation of the Primrose League.

¹⁵ BA, 45934/162 Minute book of the Clifton Bristol & Counties Ladies Club Discussion Society, 1908-1914 (CBCLC).

¹⁶ BA, 45934/162, CBCLC Minutes, list of committee members for 1908-9.

took part in the debates, and may have voted on motions.¹⁷ Therefore, the primary sources can be used, with some caveats, to identify the views of women in leadership positions, but are less useful to examine the perspectives of rank-and-file members.

The main activities of women within Bristol's Primrose League habitations

Although the *Bristol Mercury* (BM) criticised women's Primrose League activity as being 'tea and gossip', the sources show that women did take their duties seriously and were successful, particularly in the 1890s, in growing membership and achieving electoral success.¹⁸ This section will examine women's activities, including committee work, public speaking, attendance at meetings and electoral activities.

Unlike the WLA committees of like-minded women, the Primrose League's female members worked within a hierarchical, mixed-sex structure of pseudo-medieval Knights and Dames, whose membership was confirmed via a signed pledge to promote the League's objects.¹⁹ Central decision-making power lay with a ruling male-only Grand Council in London, but Dames could join the London-based Ladies Grand Council (LGC). The LGC was able to choose its own committee and control its own funds but, unlike the WLF, did not make policy.²⁰ Therefore, as Walker

¹⁷ For example, BA, 45934/162, CBCLC Minutes, 28 February 1908.

¹⁸ *Bristol Mercury* (BM), 24 August 1893.

¹⁹ Pugh, pp.21-3.

²⁰ Pugh, p.50.

suggests, it was in the local habitations that women had the opportunity to play a 'dynamic role' in politics.²¹

The Ruling Councillor was the most important officer in a local habitation, and would generally be a Knight, supported by a Dame President. The Clifton-Colston habitation minute book shows its female leadership in this supportive role, assisting the male titular head. For example, at a committee meeting in April 1906, the Colston Ruling Councillor, Mr Fenton-Miles raised concerns about a proposed speaker on education, yet it was Gronow-Davis, the Dame President, who was tasked with seeking a replacement from Primrose League Headquarters.²² She also deputised for him as Chair when he was absent.²³ However, the Bedminster habitation provides an example of a female Ruling Councillor. Hill helped to revive the moribund habitation in the South Bristol constituency, where her father was the MP, and she also created and led a South Bristol Divisional Council to co-ordinate the other habitations in the constituency.²⁴ Under her energetic leadership, the habitation won the League's annual Champion Banner for 1891 for membership growth.²⁵ Her work is identifiable through newspaper reports, but these do not give details of how she organised the habitation or made use of her other female volunteers, though it is clear that the habitation was instrumental in her father's holding of the South Bristol constituency from 1886 to 1900. As noted above, the

²¹ Walker, 'Party Political Women', p.172.

²² BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 20 April 1906.

²³ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 9 February 1907.

²⁴ *Primrose League Gazette* (PLG) March 22 1890; BTM 19 July 1890; Hannam and Martin, p.116.

²⁵ PLG, 22 March 1890.

Bedminster area was not natural territory for the Conservatives and Pugh calls this a 'classic use of female leadership' in hostile areas.²⁶

Habitation meetings were featured in the local press and PLG reports, and the Clifton-Colston habitation minutes also evidence the work women did to organise meetings. For example, Gronow-Davis was tasked in October 1908 to find a venue and arrange terms, while other women were to arrange refreshments and entertainments.²⁷ The minute book records only one female public speaker from the membership, and only one outside female speaker.²⁸ However, habitation member Mrs Atchley wrote plays which she acted, with others, at habitation public meetings, for example, one on tariff reform, received 'with much applause' in April 1910.²⁹ In contrast, the newspaper sources for the Bedminster habitation show Hill using her Ruling Councillor's role of introducing speakers to make frequent and confident public speeches. She also visited other habitations and deputised for the Ruling Councillor of the Redcliffe habitation, Vernon Hill (another member of her family).³⁰ She was also able to step into the breach when a scheduled speaker did not arrive.³¹

All members, including women, were encouraged to attend meetings. Maguire argues that female Primrose League members were expected to become educated in the topics of the day so that they could confidently undertake canvassing.³² Their

²⁶ Pugh, p. 99.

²⁷ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 13 October 1908.

²⁸ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 22 May 1914 and inserted newspaper clipping, n.d. [Spring 1913].

²⁹ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 19 April 1910.

³⁰ BTM, 2 December 1891; PLG, September 20 1890.

³¹ BTM, 31 March 1892.

³² Maguire, p.37.

opinions were not shaped by participation in robust debates but were guided by extensive material from Primrose League Headquarters, including speakers and lantern slides on topics such as 'Our Glorious Empire.'³³ But, as can be seen from the speeches of Hill, and the playwriting skills of Atchley, Bristol's Conservative women were able to make their contributions in the public arena. This contrasts with Liverpool where Cowman notes the comment of an alderman in Liverpool who criticised Liberal women for their public speaking in favour of the Primrose Dames, whose discreet behaviour made them acceptable as female politicians.³⁴ However, it should be noted that not all attendees went to meetings primarily to hear the speeches. As Pugh notes, the meetings had a 'combined character of music hall, harvest supper and women's institute'.³⁵ Women, and their families, could simply enjoy the refreshments, and entertainments, interspersed with short political speeches. For most female attendees, this may have been the extent of their activity, and their own views on political issues are not distinguishable.

Unlike the Bristol WLAs, which relied on an active minority of volunteers, electoral work was regarded by the Primrose League as the duty of all members. Women's activity, particularly in Bedminster in the 1890s, had brought electoral success for Colonel Hill, the Bristol South MP, and this can be compared with similar efforts elsewhere such as Liverpool where Cowman suggests that the electoral work of the women of the Liverpool habitations was crucial to the Conservatives regaining control of Liverpool City Council in 1895.³⁶ Walker suggests that women were

³³ Pugh, p.91.

³⁴ Cowman, p.43.

³⁵ Pugh, p.29.

³⁶ Cowman, p.40-41.

encouraged to be wardens who were responsible for specific geographic areas where they arranged electoral leafleting and canvassing, and in the Clifton-Colston habitation the list of wardens given at the 1906 annual meeting has a high proportion of women.³⁷ The habitation later benefitted from a paid female Secretary, Miss Bridges, who reorganised the wardens' work, which suggests that the earlier arrangements had not been entirely successful.³⁸ Expectations of Bristol's women's responsibilities were emphasised by the Conservative Parliamentary candidate, JT Francombe in April 1912, when he told the Clifton-Colston habitation that the 'duty of the ladies was to see that no single elector' remained uncanvassed.³⁹

Women's organisational activities are not always visible in the sources, but where women are identifiable, we can see that they were actively engaged in the day-to-day work of the habitations, and, while staying wholeheartedly within the tenets of the Primrose League, became active at public meetings. This evidences Walker's suggestion that, through these means, the idea of the woman's sphere was 'cleverly elasticated'.⁴⁰

Issues of interest to Bristol's Conservative women

The Primrose League's objects were to uphold religion, the crown, the Empire and the 'Estates of the Realm'.⁴¹ The next section considers how Hill used these in her speeches and what this suggests about her own views; then examines two other issues of interest to Conservative women: women's suffrage and tariff reform.

³⁷ Walker, 'Party Political Women', p.179; BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 15 May 1906.

³⁸ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 14 October 1910.

³⁹ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 30 April 1912.

⁴⁰ Walker, 'Party Political Women', p.173.

⁴¹ Pugh, p.23.

Hill's speeches followed a formula of a general summary of the League's principles, followed by a topical critique of Liberal policies, and praise for Conservative ones. At her first habitation meeting she set out the League's objects then criticised the 'weak and vacillating' Gladstone, while praising Lord Salisbury's trade policy.⁴² She was also very clear on the importance of members fulfilling their responsibilities as Primrose League members. For example, in 1892 she praised the two hundred members who had recruited others and scolded the remaining four hundred who 'had neglected their duty'.⁴³ Her speeches demonstrate her loyalty to the League's values and this can obscure her own specific areas of interest. However, a review of local newspaper reports of twenty of her speeches (1891-1899) shows two favoured themes: that the maintenance of religion should have primacy in the objects and that the Primrose League brought all classes together.⁴⁴ She also commented favourably on the engagement of women in politics, stating that women 'ought' to take part as their interests were 'inseparably bound up in the welfare of the country', which echoes similar statements by Bristol's Liberal women, and again evidences the argument that Conservative women's League service helped to break down the barriers to women being active in politics.⁴⁵

Boussahba-Bravard argues that political parties found it hard to 'integrate' women's activism with women's support for suffrage.⁴⁶ This is particularly true of the Primrose

⁴² BTM, 27 February 1890.

⁴³ *Western Daily Press* (WDP) 28 April 1892.

⁴⁴ For example, WDP, 17 December 1891; WDP, 5 October 1893.

⁴⁵ WDP 25 November 1891.

⁴⁶ Myriam Boussahba-Bravard, Myriam, ed. *Suffrage Outside Suffragism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), p.1.

League which tried to discourage habitations from discussing the issue, or pass resolutions in favour, stating that it was 'outside the scope' of the League.⁴⁷ While Bristol's Liberal women had been able to lobby their national body, the WLF, the LGC could not make its own policy and there was no consideration of the test question, which had caused so much tension within the WLF. But, the reissue of the League's statement several times is an indication that there may have been some struggle to enforce it.⁴⁸ In Bristol, in 1891, there is evidence of activity on this issue at the Bedminster habitation, when a resolution was passed in favour of women's suffrage two years after the League's statement forbidding such a practice.⁴⁹ At the meeting, suffragist speaker Harriett McIlquham presented a paper which was later published as a pamphlet, *The Enfranchisement of Women: An Ancient Right, A Modern Need*.⁵⁰ McIlquham presented her case with a strong nod to her hosts, putting forward evidence of sympathy to the cause by leading Conservatives such as Lord Salisbury and Arthur Balfour.⁵¹ Despite the League's strictures, a report of the meeting was published in the PLG.⁵² Auchterlonie believes that the passing of this resolution in favour of the enfranchisement 'duly qualified women' (i.e. those who could match the male qualification) was unusual.⁵³ But Jesman shows that the Bedminster habitation discussion was not unique, citing a petition sent by the women of Grantham habitation to the House of Commons in 1892.⁵⁴

⁴⁷ Robb, p.125; PLG, March 1907, p.20.

⁴⁸ Robb, p.126.

⁴⁹ BTM, 12 December 1891.

⁵⁰ LSE Women's Library (LSEWL), PC/06/396-11/07, UDC Pamphlet Collection: Suffrage Pamphlets, 1872-1913, McIlquham, Mrs, *The Enfranchisement of Women: An Ancient Right, a Modern Need* (London: Women's Emancipation Union, 1891).

⁵¹ LSEWL, PC/06/396-11/07, McIlquham, p.17-8.

⁵² PLG, 26 December 1891.

⁵³ Mitzi Marita Auchterlonie, 'Conservative Women, the Conservative Party, and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage, 1867-1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2002), p.71.

⁵⁴ Jesman, p.73.

Furthermore, the opinions of other female Primrose League members can be gleaned from discussions at the CBCLC in the 1900s. For example, Gronow-Davis, then Dame President of the Colston habitation, refuted the idea that women did not want the vote in a debate at the Society in December 1906.⁵⁵ The CBCLC minutes also record that she chaired a debate on 2 December 1908 on the motion of 'women ought to have the Parliamentary vote.'⁵⁶ The minutes, though lacking detail of what was said, indicate that there was a large attendance, including visitor non-members, with many speeches, including from Emily Smith who was also a member of the Clifton-Colston habitation. The minutes report a 'very animated and good discussion,' and the motion was carried.⁵⁷

Gronow-Davis was probably a member of the BWoESS; she seconded motions at two of its meetings, including a motion in 1907, proposed by Smith, in favour of a women's franchise Bill in Parliament.⁵⁸ Tanner also notes that both women were the 'chief promoters' of the CUWFA in Bristol, which formed in 1909.⁵⁹ The CUWFA gave women the opportunity to pursue the suffrage campaign in an organisation outside of the Primrose League but one which shared its broad values. A report of her speech to a CUWFA meeting in February 1909, evidences Gronow-Davis's view

⁵⁵ *Clifton Society* (CS), 6 December 1906.

⁵⁶ BA, 45934/162, CBCLC, 2 December 1908.

⁵⁷ BA, 45934/162, CBCLC, 2 December 1908.

⁵⁸ CS, 2 March 1905; CS, 21 February 1907.

⁵⁹ S. J. Tanner, *How the Suffrage Movement Began in Bristol Fifty Years Ago* (1918), p.14.

that enfranchisement of duly qualified women would hold back adult suffrage, which was an argument put forward by many Conservative suffragists.⁶⁰

Therefore, the issue of women's suffrage was important for some of the women who were leading Primrose League members. They pursued their campaign largely outside of their habitation meetings which may indicate that, despite the resolution passed in Bedminster in 1891, they tried to adhere to the directions of the Primrose League Grand Council not to pursue this question within habitations. As a result, it did not become the divisive issue within the habitations as it had done within the WLAs.

The final issue to be considered is tariff reform. From 1903, tensions developed in the Conservative Party between those in favour of free trade and others who wanted tariff reform to create a protectionist trade policy with preference given to the Empire's colonies. Vervaecke argues that this was another area where the League tried to promote its neutrality on the topic.⁶¹ However, it struggled to maintain this position, as pressure grew from Conservative activists who had established the Tariff Reform League (TRL) in 1903 to campaign for the adoption of protectionist policies.⁶² By 1904, the TRL was establishing local women's sections and Vervaecke argues that that these new sections were in competition with Primrose League habitations for women's engagement.⁶³ By contrast, in Bristol, evidence

⁶⁰ BTM, 23 February 1909.

⁶¹ Vervaecke, p.181.

⁶² Pugh, pp.169-71.

⁶³ Pugh, pp.169-71; Vervaecke, p.181.

indicates that the suffragists, Gronow-Davis and Smith became campaigners for tariff reform, whilst remaining as Primrose League members. Smith was the Secretary of a Women's Bristol Branch of the TRL (WBTRL), and Gronow-Davis was an attendee at a 1905 Branch meeting.⁶⁴ The women also worked from within their habitations to promote the tariff reform campaign. In June 1907, Gronow-Davis and a sub-committee of the Colston habitation arranged a large public meeting on tariff reform in combination with the TRL, but agreed not to use the Primrose League name in the advertisements.⁶⁵ A BTM report lists Gronow-Davis, Smith, and Miss Averay-Jones (the habitation Honorary Secretary) in a list of the organising committee for the meeting, but gives no indication of Primrose League involvement.⁶⁶ A further joint meeting was arranged in November 1910 after a written request to the Clifton-Colston habitation by Smith on behalf of the WBTRL.⁶⁷ Yet, the meeting is reported in the minute book, and the BTM, as a Primrose League lecture on South Africa and the West Indies, with oblique reference to colonial preference. It is not even clear if Smith is present as she is not listed in the principal attendees which evidences again the difficulty of identifying women's activities.⁶⁸ However, by November 1911, the Women's Unionist and Tariff Reform Association and the Clifton-Colston habitation were able to openly hold a joint meeting, where Atchley's play on tariff reform was performed.⁶⁹ Therefore, the habitation was involved in supporting the campaign of the TRL, tacitly at first and then unambiguously, with the explicit involvement of its

⁶⁴ CS, 9 November 1905, p.11.

⁶⁵ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 3 June 1907 and 17 June 1907.

⁶⁶ BTM, 22 July 1907.

⁶⁷ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 11 May 1910 and 14 October 1910.

⁶⁸ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 10 November 1910; *BTM*, 11 November 1910.

⁶⁹ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes, 9 November 1911, *BTM*, 10 November 1911.

female Executive Committee members and provides evidence that this was an issue of interest for these women.

This section has shown that in Bristol, despite the Primrose League attempts to avoid contentious issues, its female leaders were able to engage in debates on the issues of interest to them, while remaining as habitation members, and thus they avoided public splits such as those which affected the Liberal women of the WBWLA.

Kinship and campaign networks

Pugh suggests that there were strong family links which influenced membership of habitations including husband and wife partnerships, and father and daughter combinations.⁷⁰ Evidence shows the same pattern in Bristol, for example the husband and wife partnerships at the Colston, and later the Clifton-Colston habitation, of Mr and Mrs Fenton-Miles and Mr and Mrs Green-Armytage.⁷¹ As seen above, Hill was the daughter of the local MP, which evidences not only a familial connection with the Primrose League but, as with Liberal MPs' wives, the expectation that candidates' families would actively support constituency political organisations. This is not confined to Bristol; Cowman notes that the Dame President of Liverpool's most successful habitation of Toxteth was the MP's wife.⁷² She also notes that the Dame President's service was for the duration of her husband's association with the city, which is similar to Hill's withdrawal from

⁷⁰ Pugh, p.39.

⁷¹ BA, 46273, Clifton-Colston minutes ,27 April 1906, 3 February 1908 and 15 June 1908.

⁷² Cowman, p.44.

leadership positions at Bedminster habitation after her father's retirement. But Hill's service also could be seen as fulfilling the idea of a woman's proper role being supportive to family, even as she stood up in public places and gave extempore speeches. Her example supports the idea that the Primrose League women were traditional, but also quietly revolutionary.

In comparing the Merseyside women's Liberal and Conservative organisations, Cowman notes they found little 'common ground' with each other.⁷³ However, there is evidence that, in Bristol, while the two groups were indeed rivals, they also had opportunities to meet and debate with each other, for example at the CBCLC. WBWLA member, Dr Eliza Dunbar spoke frequently at club debates; in February 1908 she was the main speaker against a motion on education in a debate chaired by Mrs Fenton-Miles.⁷⁴ The women also made 'common ground' in the BWoESS. In addition to Gronow-Davis and Smith, Green-Armytage was linked to the Society and was listed as present at an at home meeting of the Bristol Women's Suffrage Society in May 1907, in the company of among others, Anna-Maria Priestman.⁷⁵ The women involved in the Primrose League were as influenced by their family connections as were their Liberal counterparts, and like them, they pursued campaigns for the issues they cared about. But, while they worked to elect Conservative candidates and were heavily engaged in the campaign to influence Conservative policy on tariff reform, they can also be seen collaborating with their Liberal counterparts on the suffrage campaign.

⁷³ Cowman, p.51.

⁷⁴ BA, 45934/162, CBCLC, 28 February 1908; Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Women's Liberal Association Reports, 1882-1904 (BRL BWLAR), 34147, WBWLA Annual Report 1904.

⁷⁵ WDP, 27 May 1907.

This chapter has argued that Bristol's women were able to engage actively with Conservative organisations such as the Primrose League, particularly where they had family links to the Conservative Party. While some simply attended meetings, and supported electoral work, others were able to take on organisational and leadership roles. They worked within the accepted ideas of what was appropriate for women in public life. They promulgated but did not make the policy of the League – even where it affected them, such as women's suffrage. Some became active public speakers, such as Hill and Gronow-Davis, and were comfortable in public leadership positions. Their role appears to be very different from the Liberal women who consciously tried to influence specific policies from within their organisation. However, from the Edwardian period, change can be seen as Conservative women in Bristol, linked to Primrose League habitations, led local campaigns for specific policy changes through new political associations. By 1909, it was possible for Gronow-Davis to receive a round of applause from an audience of Conservative women when she told them that while a 'women's first duty lay in her home, her duty should not be limited to it'.⁷⁶

⁷⁶ BTM, 23 February 1909.

Chapter Four: Elected Women, 1877-1914

This chapter considers female political engagement in Bristol in this period through the activities of women who were elected to the Bristol School Board (BSB) and the city's Boards of Guardians. It argues that, despite the barriers women faced both to their election and their active participation on the boards, many were able to influence the boards in their areas of interest, with some becoming experts in their field. Bristol as a city of progressive ideas and feminist activity can also be evidenced through the work of these women, linking their participation with the breaking down of the idea of women's role being confined to a separate domestic sphere. This was more evident in the School Board arena, where women were able to promote successful policy initiatives, than the Boards of Guardians which concentrated on the detailed routine administration of the Poor Law in the city. Links to political parties proved helpful for those standing for the boards, and there were other links between the women such as shared philanthropic work, and involvement in the campaign for women's suffrage. The chapter uses the primary sources to explore the women's experience but will also highlight the challenges in identifying their contributions. The chapter concludes with an analysis of women's unsuccessful attempts to get elected to the Bristol City Council, which evidences that some areas of public life remained out of reach for women in this period.

Local boards, their sources and historiography

School boards were directly elected by local ratepayers and tasked to provide and run elementary schools in areas where there was a shortfall of school places.

School boards existed from 1870-1903, when they were replaced by Local Education Authorities and no longer directly elected. Women ratepayers were able to vote in the school board elections, thanks to the 1869 extension of the municipal franchise, and the Education Act (1870) also allowed women to stand as candidates. Bristol had one, city-wide board, which had nine women members across its lifetime, starting in 1877 with Helena Richardson.¹

The organisation of the Boards of Guardians in this period was complex, reflecting changes in Bristol's boundaries as the city grew. The Bristol Corporation of the Poor covered the old city area, with newer districts included in the Barton Regis (Clifton) Board and the suburb of Bedminster included in a predominantly Somerset board.² The three bodies partially amalgamated in 1898 to become the Bristol Board of Guardians but did not fully cover the city boundaries until 1904.³ The boards were tasked with the implementation of the 1834 Poor Law Act to provide poverty relief either through subsistence payments (outdoor relief) or admission to the boards' workhouses (indoor relief). The electoral process was, until 1894, dominated by a propertied vote and the status of women as electors and candidates was also unclear until 1881.⁴ The first women guardians in Bristol were elected to the Barton

¹ Patricia Hollis, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987), p. 39.

² Moira Martin, 'Managing the Poor: The Administration of Poor Relief in Bristol in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century' in *The Making of Modern Bristol* ed. by Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 156-183, (p.158).

³ E.E. Butcher, *Bristol Corporation of the Poor* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1972) [Historical Association pamphlet no 29], p.23; Martin, 'Managing the Poor', p.169.

⁴ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.206.

Regis Board in 1882 on a slate co-ordinated by Mary Clifford.⁵ The removal of the property qualification in 1894 encouraged the election of more women and the number rose to eleven by 1895, dropping back to nine by 1912 on the amalgamated board.⁶

The primary sources for this chapter are Board minute books, and newspaper reports. The Bristol School Board papers are almost complete, however, official records for all the Boards of Guardians were lost due to wartime bomb damage.⁷ Only two years of unsigned minutes for Bristol's Board of Guardians, 1901-1903 survive, the papers of one of the attendees.⁸ Minute books of official bodies record formal decisions rather than the discussion, though women's activity can be traced through the issues they raised and their voting records. The minutes also reflect the selection of material by each board's clerk. The 1901-1903 minutes show that the Board covered issues at a granular level including decisions on some individual cases, and even low value purchasing decisions. The School Board minutes, by contrast, evidence that this Board worked at a more strategic level.⁹

Local newspapers attended the main board meetings of the city's public bodies and published reports the following day, and for the city's boards of guardians they are the main primary source. They have an immediacy that the formal Clerk's record

⁵ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.233.

⁶ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.208.

⁷ David Large, *Bristol and the New Poor Law* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1995) [Historical Association pamphlet no 86], p.1.

⁸ BA, 10243, Welfare Committee, Guardians of the Poor minutes, 1901-1903 (Guardians minutes).

⁹ BA, Bristol School Board, 1867 – 1914 (BA BSB), 21131/BSB/Adm/M/1, Board Minutes 1871-1903.

does not have, but only cover a fraction of the discussion. For example, comparison with the 1901-1903 minutes shows that newspaper reports are extremely brief summaries of very long meetings, with few reported contributions from women, other than those who were well established board members.

Therefore, the primary sources can evidence women's contributions on elected boards, albeit with some gaps, and as noted throughout this study, the caveat that not all women's contributions have been recorded.

There were tensions between standing for public elected office and the idea of women remaining in a separate domestic sphere. As Steinbach shows, women's response was to stress their specifically 'feminine contribution' to boards' work, by emphasising that as, their duties related to children, their education and their welfare, the work was an extension of the domestic sphere.¹⁰ Hollis evidences that elected women had a focus on the quality of provision, which, she suggests, would otherwise have been 'less regarded'.¹¹ While this indicates that there was a progression from middle-class women's charitable work to elected service, as Hollis and Prochaska have each argued, Hannam's approach is that there is there is a more complex connection between philanthropic and political action, noting that philanthropy showed 'suspicion of state intervention'.¹² Additionally, Hollis argues,

¹⁰ Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004), p.242.

¹¹ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p. viii.

¹² Patricia Hollis, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space,' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.192-213 (p.194); F. Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: OUP, 1980), p.227; June Hannam, 'Women and politics,' in *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945: an Introduction*, ed. by June Purvis (London: UCL Press Limited, 1995), pp.217-245 (p 221).

that service on boards was seen by women as a chance to advance their 'citizen and suffrage rights'.¹³ Local studies can help to explore these debates. For example, Smitley highlights women's special skills in public work through her description of the work of Scottish women in philanthropy, including Poor Law Guardians, as 'social mothering'.¹⁴ Bristol's historians have also considered these themes. Hannam's survey of the Bristol women's movement evidences the influence of female BSB members, many of whom were suffragists, in the achievement of the Board's progressive initiatives.¹⁵ Martin shows how women such as Clifford were influenced by their charitable service to stand for election to their local Board of Guardians where they urged a more humane approach to the most vulnerable whilst opposing the provision of outdoor relief to the able-bodied.¹⁶ This chapter will consider these debates further through an analysis of the activities Bristol's female elected members, their interests and their links with charitable organisations and the suffrage campaign.

The main activities of women on local boards

To serve on boards, women first had to get elected, which took courage in an era when women were not expected to take part in public life. Richardson was the first to be elected in Bristol in 1877 as an independent member of the BSB, campaigning for temperance. She was described by a supporter as someone who had a 'quiet,

¹³ Hollis, 'Women in Council' p.197.

¹⁴ Megan Smitley, *The Feminine Public Sphere: Middle-class Women and Civic Life in Scotland, c.1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009), p.7.

¹⁵ June Hannam, 'An Enlarged Sphere of Usefulness': the Bristol Women's Movement, c1860-1914' in *The Making of Modern Bristol* ed. by Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp.184 – 209 (p.197).

¹⁶ Martin, 'Managing the Poor', p.168.

ladylike manner', with a 'social position in society' which could command respect.¹⁷ There is also some evidence of women's reluctance to become candidates in the early part of the period. Clifford wrote to her brother of Catherine Woollam's hesitancy in 1882, worried that Woollam would withdraw her candidacy.¹⁸ These examples show the societal norms which women had to negotiate when they stood for public office.

Richardson's unexpected election, which threatened the narrow Liberal majority on the BSB, led the city's male Liberals to realise that they needed their own women candidates, and Richardson lost her seat at the 1880 election to the Liberal Emily Sturge.¹⁹ Henceforward local newspaper reports of election meetings show that all women candidates for the BSB had political affiliation, mostly Liberals with some Conservatives. This indicates that party political affiliation was important for women to become School Board members. But, although four of the six female guardians elected in Bristol before 1894 can be evidenced as members of the BWLA/WBWLA, newspaper reports do not ascribe political labels to the candidates for Boards of Guardians contests, suggesting that party political affiliation was not used for these elections.²⁰ Hollis argues that until 1894, women guardians generally stood as independents even if they had links to political parties.²¹ However, the BWLA/WBWLA annual reports also show that Liberal women openly canvassed for their members' elections to Boards of Guardians, for example for Caroline Terrell, a

¹⁷ *Western Daily Press* (WDP), 17 January 1877.

¹⁸ G. M. Williams, *Mary Clifford* (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1921), p.105.

¹⁹ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, pp.156-158.

²⁰ Bristol Reference Library, Bristol Women's Liberal Association Reports, 1882-1904 (BRL BWLAR), 34147, Annual Reports 1888, 1889, 1895.

²¹ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.223.

BWLA member, elected to Barton Regis board in 1889.²² There is further complexity in that Clifford's slate in 1882, which was supported by the Liberal elite, included Woollam who later became a founder member of the Colston Primrose League.²³ Therefore, the status of female guardians as independents is more complex than Hollis suggests. However, political affiliation became more common after the 1894 elections: Emily Webb in 1900, was publicly supported by the Bristol Labour Electoral Association as their candidate.²⁴ Bristol's experience contrasts with Liverpool where Cowman describes resistance from the city's male Liberal hierarchy to a female Guardian as late as 1893, despite the candidate being the widow of one of their own aldermen. However, she also notes that, as with Bristol, once an independent woman had successfully stood for the Board of Guardians, resistance crumbled and by 1894 in Liverpool all the political parties had women candidates.²⁵

The primary sources for Bristol provide good evidence of women's participation on boards, including diligent attendance, committee service and views expressed at meetings. By comparison Masson has shown that, in Wales, beyond their conscientious attendance at Board meetings, little is known about women's detailed service on Boards of Guardians.²⁶ The Bristol sources also provide evidence for Hollis's assertion that that many women members were 'effectively full time unpaid public servants'.²⁷ For example, for 1889-1890, Woollam attended fifty-one of the

²² BRL BWLAR, 34147, Annual Report, 1889.

²³ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.195; BA, 46273, Records of the Clifton Colston habitation of the Primrose League. (Clifton-Colston minutes), 16 November 1909.

²⁴ WDP, 24 November 1900.

²⁵ Krista Cowman, *Mrs Brown is a man and a brother: women in Merseyside's political organisations, 1890-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004), p.49.

²⁶ Ursula Masson, 'For women, for Wales and for Liberalism': women in Liberal politics in Wales c. 1883-1914 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the West of England, Bristol, 2007), pp.156-157.

²⁷ Hollis, 'Women in Council', p.198.

fifty-two weekly meetings at Barton Regis Board of Guardians.²⁸ Later she served on the Hospital Committee of the amalgamated Bristol Board, her area of expertise as a member of Clifton District Nurses Association, attending thirty-nine out of forty-one meetings in 1901-1902.²⁹ The 1901-1903 Bristol Board minutes show that women served on committees which dealt with domestic welfare matters rather than financial, or strategic matters, and none chaired committees or the Board, although they could vote in main Board meetings on Finance committee recommendations. Newspaper reports also provide evidence that their views could be outvoted, even on domestic issues, by the substantial male majorities on the boards, who sought to reduce expenditure even on trivial matters. For example, in 1908, the Barton Regis Provisions Committee, on which no woman sat, recommended the purchase of margarine instead of butter. Despite Jane Tillett's protestations that this lowered the 'standard of living' for inmates with an inferior product which she would not give to her own children, the board voted overwhelmingly to ratify this change.³⁰

Attendance figures for the BSB also show the diligent service of women members, for example, Richardson attended forty meetings in 1879 (one of only three members on forty and above) and Sturge headed the table in 1890 with 140 attendances.³¹ This not only evidences their diligence but shows the increased demands on members' time as this Board's work grew in complexity. None of the women ever chaired the Board, but by the 1890s they had been able to take charge

²⁸ WDP, 19 April 1890.

²⁹ June Hannam and Moria Martin, 'Women in Bristol 1835-1914' in *Women and the City Bristol 1373-2000*, ed. by Madge Dresser (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2016), pp.92 – 135 (pp.118-119); BA 10243 Guardians minutes, 9 April 1903.

³⁰ WDP, 31 October 1908.

³¹ *Bristol Mercury* (BM), 24 January 1880; BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/1/9 Minute book 1890-1893, 30 January 1891.

of committees in their areas of interest. For example, Sturge chaired the Evening Classes Committee, and Marion Townsend chaired a committee related to children with special needs, evidencing that they were able to lead areas of the BSB's work. Although they did not sit on the Finance Committee, they were also able to question finance reports presented to each monthly main Board. They could also vote on major spending decisions, such as the construction of new schools, for example, on 28 October 1887, Sturge proposed a successful motion to challenge architects' plans and costings for an additional department at Ashton Gate. The effect of the motion was to promote better management of the project's cost.³²

Therefore, women were able to overcome barriers of cultural norms, navigate the electoral process and use their party-political links to gain election to the boards. Their activity in meetings and as committee members shows a high standard of commitment to the long hours and complex nature of their boards' work. There is also evidence that the women engaged with all the issues considered by their boards, that they were focused on quality of provision as Hollis suggested but that the BSB members in particular were more able to influence strategic decisions.

Issues of interest to the female elected board members

Sturge was the most recognisably successful member of the Board, as part of the progressive Liberal majority, serving for twelve years until her untimely death in 1892. Her key interests were quality of provision including better facilities, better

³² BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/1/7, Minute book 1886-1888, 28 October 1887.

teacher training, evening classes for those who had not been able to go on to secondary education in the city, and the treatment of children who truanted from school. As she led much of this work, her efforts are well evidenced in Board minutes and press reports. Her key strategic project was the establishment of a Truant School in Bristol, opened in 1884 as a residential centre for persistently truant boys, providing a few months 'strict course of discipline'.³³ She had a leading role in drafting the original report which recommended the establishment of the school.³⁴ Although the school was commended by a government inspector, the work was not without its challenges.³⁵ The school detained the boys but, as for all Board schools of the time, compulsory fees were charged, and therefore, unsurprisingly, there was dissent from parents, including some public claims of mistreatment.³⁶ Sturge presented reports to the Board on these matters, and was involved in the committee investigating mistreatment in 1884.³⁷ Sturge had influenced the Board to set up the school and worked diligently to support its work, even when that work was challenged. These were concrete policy successes, and it is clear that she was a significant influence on the direction of the board.

The final years of the BSB saw growing expertise related to children with special needs through a committee chaired by Townsend, also a member of the Liberal majority.³⁸ The committee's minutes evidence the extensive nature of the work, for example, negotiations across 1902 with the main Board and later the Government's

³³ BM, 29 March 1884.

³⁴ BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/4/3, Minute book, 1881-1887, Truancy Committee, 15 November 1881.

³⁵ Cyril Gibson, *The Bristol School Board: 1871-1903* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1997) [Historical Association pamphlet no 93], p.14.

³⁶ BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/1/6, Minute book 1884-1886, 25 July 1884.

³⁷ BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/4/3, Industrial School Committee, 18 September 1884.

³⁸ BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/10/1, Minute book 1896-1903, 17 September 1896.

Education Department to set up a special needs class at Redcross School.³⁹ Like Sturge she successfully steered through the Board a significant proposal, in this case to set up a ground-breaking residential institution for deaf children, a year ahead of legislation that gave education authorities responsibility to provide such education, which again evidences that female BSB members were responsible for new initiatives.⁴⁰ Townsend's expertise was recognised when she was co-opted onto the new Bristol Education Committee in 1903, the successor body to the BSB, to lead the continuing work on special needs.⁴¹

Sturge and Townsend are examples of how Liberal women, embedded within the majority group on the BSB, and unhindered by obstruction from their male colleagues, developed expert knowledge and led radical, costly projects. This contrasts with Cowman's depiction of Liverpool School Board, which had just two women members in its lifetime, whose contributions were rooted in their religious rather than political beliefs, with a concentration on casework and visiting duties.⁴² It also contrasts with women's experience on the Bristol Poor Law Boards which is considered below.

Although the press coverage and surviving minutes of Boards of Guardians' meetings rarely included women's contributions, they contain some glimpses which

³⁹ BA BSB 21131/BSB/Adm/M/10/1, Minute book 1896-1903, 14 February 1902 – 17 October 1902.

⁴⁰ Gibson, p.18; Hannam, 'Enlarged Sphere', p.197.

⁴¹ BA, Bristol Education Committee, 1903 – 1974 sub-collection, 21131/EC/Adm/M/1/2, Minute Book 1903-1912, 1 April 1903.

⁴² Krista Cowman, "Engendering Citizenship", *The Political Involvement of Women on Merseyside, 1890 – 1920* (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1994), p.71-73.

evidence women's interests and support Hollis's suggestion that women guardians focused on the domestication of the workhouse with more cleanliness, better food; and the removal of the most vulnerable groups into smaller, more professionally run settings.⁴³ For example, four women proposed that tuberculosis patients be moved to smaller premises by the sea at Clevedon.⁴⁴ In addition, Woollam, who was 'instrumental' in the employment of qualified nurses at Barton Regis workhouse's sick wards tried to ensure that nurses' holiday allocation gave them sufficient rest from 'excessively disagreeable work'.⁴⁵ These examples also show that the women's interests derive from philanthropic ideas towards those in need, but Levine suggests it would be 'untenable' to link such philanthropy to the feminism of the women's movement on the basis that philanthropy accepted inequality as the status quo rather than challenging it.⁴⁶ This can be shown in the interest of Clifford in the classification of the paupers to separate the 'hopeful elements from the practically hopeless'.⁴⁷ The interests of the early female guardians, including Clifford, were shaped by their links to the Charity Organisation Society (COS), which trained women charitable workers, and which argued that, by restricting their access to outdoor relief, the Poor Law Act encouraged families to be independent of public funds.⁴⁸ In December 1886, Clifford promoted co-operation between the Society and the Board to reduce the use of outdoor relief, and prevent 'a good deal of misapplication of charity'.⁴⁹ However, after 1894 Hollis detects a change of approach towards outdoor relief through challenge from newly elected, working-class

⁴³ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.247.

⁴⁴ BA, 10243, Guardians minutes, 29 March 1901.

⁴⁵ Hannam and Martin, p.118; BM, 24 March 1900.

⁴⁶ P. Levine, *Feminist Lives in Victorian England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988), p.177.

⁴⁷ M. Clifford, NUWW Conference, Liverpool, 1891, cited in Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.22.

⁴⁸ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.20.

⁴⁹ BM, 11 December 1886.

guardians, whose interests were different and who did not accept inequality as the status quo.⁵⁰ Webb, a Labour guardian, can be evidenced criticising those who tried to restrict outdoor relief at a time of distress in the city in 1905, complaining that relieving officers had been directing people to the workhouse rather providing financial support.⁵¹ These female guardians remained anxious to care for those in need, but their work was infused with feminist ideas which challenged the status quo of inequality across gender and class.

Evidence from Bristol also shows female guardians supporting important strategic projects, such as the proposal for a new infirmary, but, unlike the women school board members, they encountered opposition from some of the male board members. To resolve overcrowding and improve health facilities, in April 1901, the Board approved an agreement with an architect for a new infirmary with all the women members voting in favour.⁵² However, over the next decade a long dispute ensued between the women guardians, (supported by the Labour male guardians), and a majority group wary of the cost. The majority successfully put forward counter proposals for alterations to existing facilities which the women members opposed, and which Woollam described as 'tinkering up old buildings'.⁵³ Although the majority's view was approved several times at Board level, it was also opposed by the Local Government Board, enabling the women to re-open the debate.⁵⁴ The wrangling may be the reason for a waspish comment at the Board that 'ladies were

⁵⁰ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.290.

⁵¹ WDP, 11 March 1905.

⁵² BA, 10243, Guardians minutes, 26 April 1901.

⁵³ WDP, 9 January 1904.

⁵⁴ *Bristol Times and Mirror* (BTM,) 18 March 1904.

valuable as guardians provided they came in limited numbers'.⁵⁵ Woollam died before the issue was resolved and in 1910 the women despaired that any progress would be made. Mary Graham suggested that a 'large number' of members 'hoped the board would go on talking for another ten years and nothing happen'.⁵⁶ The issue evidences the barriers faced by women who were trying to improve facilities for the acute sick who could not afford treatment elsewhere. The Board contained over sixty members and, even with the support of working-class men, the women did not have sufficient numbers to persuade the majority to take up this significant strategic project. This compares with the women on the BSB, many of whom were part of the majority group and therefore able to progress their ideas. But the issue also evidences the women's determination to keep pursuing this important project and in 1912, having taken over a facility at Southmead, the Board finally went ahead with the building of some new infirmary wards there.⁵⁷

In summary, those who served on Bristol's School Board were able to influence the Board in the pursuit of progressive, strategic projects. Those women who served on the Boards of Guardians faced barriers when they attempted to promote similar projects. The early guardians were more likely to see their work as an extension of their other philanthropic activities and were keen for the Board to work in step with local charities, but when working-class women joined the Board, they challenged this approach.

⁵⁵ WDP, 9 April 1904.

⁵⁶ BTM, 5 November 1910.

⁵⁷ WDP, 23 March 1912.

Charitable and campaign networks

Martin uses the example of Clifford to show that single women in Bristol, in particular, were able to make an impact on Bristol's 'civic society' through their membership of multiple philanthropic organisations.⁵⁸ Hollis also argues that the National Union of Working Women (NUWW), (which provided mutual support and shared good practice for women engaged in voluntary social work) and the COS were particularly influential and 'bridged women's voluntary and municipal work'.⁵⁹ This can be evidenced in Bristol. Woollam and Clifford were involved with the COS, and as seen above, Clifford, recommended its methods to the Bristol Board of Guardians.⁶⁰ Clifford, Woollam and Alice Winkworth were all active members of the NUWW, and its forerunner the Union of Women Workers (UWW).⁶¹ Clifford addressed the UWW conference in Bristol in 1892 and she was elected NUWW President in 1903.⁶² However, Labour and Socialist women guardians had stronger connections to socialist campaigning than to charities. For example, Webb was the wife of a railway signalman and a member of the Women's Labour League, and Tillett, the wife of a trade union activist, was an Executive Committee member of the Bristol Socialist Society.⁶³ These women brought a shared life experience to the Boards which was different from that of the middle-class women.

⁵⁸ Moira Martin, 'Single Women and Philanthropy: a case study of women's associational life in Bristol, 1880–1914', *Women's History Review*, 17:3 (2008), 395–417 (p.396).

⁵⁹ Hollis, *Ladies Elect*, p.20.

⁶⁰ Martin, 'Single Women', p.400.

⁶¹ Martin, 'Single Women', p.409.

⁶² Martin, 'Single Women', p.409; Williams, p.201.

⁶³ Census for England and Wales, 1911, Bristol, RG14/14950; Hannam and Martin, p129; Census, 1911, Bristol, RG14/14932.

As with the Liberal and Conservative women discussed in previous chapters, there were cross-party links to the campaign for women's Parliamentary suffrage. Three School Board members were on the Executive Committee of the BoWESS in 1890, including Sturge who was its Honorary Secretary.⁶⁴ Hannam also suggests that the 1882 election of women guardians had been encouraged by the BoWESS.⁶⁵ There were also suffrage supporters in the Labour camp. For example, Webb signed a public petition in favour of women's suffrage in 1907.⁶⁶ Tillett openly supported women's suffrage at a Board meeting where she described 'the injustice of legislation by men for the other half of humanity who had not the vote'.⁶⁷ This supports Hollis's argument that elected women were keen to use their service to press their claims for the vote.⁶⁸ But, although Clifford was a suffrage supporter, she played down any link with her guardian service, which indicates that some elected women were wary of using their elected positions to press their claims for the Parliamentary vote.⁶⁹

This chapter has analysed contributions to two specific types of elected board in Bristol, those related to education, and to the relief of the poor. Twenty-nine women were elected to these bodies in the study period, yet none were elected to the city council, despite a legislative change in 1907 which made them eligible for election.⁷⁰ In 1907, three women stood unsuccessfully including Helen Sturge as a Liberal and

⁶⁴LSE Women's Library (LSEWL), 2BWS, Records of the Bristol and West of England Society for Women's Suffrage, 1867-1910, Annual Report 1878.

⁶⁵ Hannam, 'Enlarged Sphere,' p.198.

⁶⁶ WDP, 31 January 1907.

⁶⁷ WDP, 28 November 1908.

⁶⁸ Hollis, 'Women in Council' p.197.

⁶⁹ Hannam, 'Enlarged Sphere,' p.198.

⁷⁰ Hollis, 'Women in Council' p.205.

Smith, the Conservative suffragist, standing as an independent.⁷¹ As Cowman shows in Liverpool, there were barriers to women's participation which could include the antipathy of local party managers. She evidences two Liberal women who were accepted as candidates but were put to fight in strong Tory wards and were unsuccessful.⁷² Bristol's experience also demonstrates that although women were accepted by electors and party managers for boards of guardians, and the BSB, they were not so easily accepted onto the city council.

This chapter has argued that after the franchise changes of 1869 onwards, women came forward to put their philanthropic, organisational and political skills to use as elected members and to show their worth as members of Bristol's civic society. Although they were not able to break onto the city council in this period, they were able to diligently serve the city as BSB members and guardians and to promote humane and progressive ideas on their boards. Rendall has argued that after 1869 elected women 'transcended' the boundaries between domestic, social and political 'responsibilities'.⁷³ This was true of Bristol where women's work on local public boards, though centred in ideas of domesticity, had broken down some of the boundaries between home and the public world.

⁷¹ Hannam and Martin, p.126.

⁷² Cowman, *Mrs Brown*, p.123.

⁷³ Jane Rendall, 'John Stuart Mill, Liberal Politics, and the Movements for Women's Suffrage, 1865-1873' in Amanda Vickery, ed., *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp.168-200 (p.195).

Chapter Five: Conclusion

This study sought to identify to what extent Bristol's women engaged in political activities in the period 1877-1918, and it used the experiences of Liberal and Conservative women, and women who stood for elected office to explore this question. Each chapter focused on one group of women, using the themes set out in the introduction, i.e. the organisations and activities they engaged in, their policy interests, their links with each other, and the extent to which their own contributions can be identified.

The study found that women who engaged in party political activities as Liberal or Conservative sympathisers had a different experience from each other. The WLAs were created and led by women, and had a feminist influenced approach to detailed policy discussion and campaigns on women's rights. By contrast, Conservative women were encouraged to join a mixed-sex organisation, the Primrose League, which used their skills, and informed their political thinking but did not encourage campaigning outside of its own broad values. However, the activities of each organisation were a similar mix of meetings, and electoral work, particularly canvassing. Furthermore, such activities enabled a gradual move by women into the public arena. Women were also successfully elected to the BSB, and to the city's Boards of Guardians, where they worked diligently with an emphasis on improvement in quality of provision, and with some BSB members able to hold leadership roles and progress strategic projects.

Bristol's Liberal women's areas of interest were profoundly influenced by moral considerations and demands for female political equality, which they pursued despite the antipathy of Liberal Party leaders. Conservative women loyally promulgated the policy of the Primrose League, but particularly towards the end of the period, they began to work through women's groups of their own to promote their own interests, including campaigning for the Parliamentary vote. Elected women were interested in what could be termed domestic issues but these were domestic issues in which the state had become involved, enabling the women to emphasise that their specifically female contribution was necessary to the boards.

Families, religion and class influenced the choice of political activity. Women were also linked through many of Bristol's other associations, including philanthropic organisations, and other campaign groups. Philanthropic experience was particularly relevant for those elected to public boards. The Liberal and Conservative networks were distinct, but they had common ground through the BoWESS and the CBCLC.

Bristol's extensive primary sources enabled a detailed analysis of women's personal contributions to political activity, often with the women's own voices being quoted. However, those most likely to be visible in the sources were those in leadership positions, which highlighted that there is very little direct evidence of the views of other participants.

In summary, Bristol women were able to actively engage in political activity in this period, even though they did not have a Parliamentary vote. The research has added greater depth to areas which were previously covered in a fragmentary way.¹ By reviewing what the women did, what they were interested in, and how they linked to each other, the research has confirmed that Bristol was a centre of political activity for women. The research has identified a more nuanced understanding of the Liberal tensions over suffrage, but otherwise aligns with the historiographical view of the WLAs' muscular debating, moral campaigning and a feminist agenda consciously pressing for women's public and political rights. The Conservative women have been shown to be equally active and effective campaigners, also interested in shaping national policy areas, such as tariff reform. Those women elected to public office served with distinction, despite barriers to their election and to their policy agendas. The research supports the idea that women moved from having solely domestic concerns, to campaigning on those domestic issues in the public arena, with a focus on improving political rights for women. Comparison with other cities such as Liverpool and Glasgow indicates that Bristol was not unique in the amount of political activity by women in this period. By the end of the period, though Bristol's women still could not vote in Parliamentary elections, other barriers had fallen. Their contributions as electoral workers and as elected board members could not be ignored and in this respect, they had succeeded in demonstrating women's fitness for 'a wider political and public life'.²

¹ June Hannam, ' "An Enlarged Sphere of Usefulness": the Bristol Women's Movement, c1860-1914,' in *The Making of Modern Bristol* ed. by Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp.184-209 (p.184).

² Patricia Hollis, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space,' in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.192-213 (p.194).

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Bristol Archives

Bristol Archives, 10900, Barton Regis Union Annual Book, 1897

Bristol Archives; Bristol School Board, 1867 – 1914 collection, 21131/BSB including:

21131/BSB/Adm/M/1, Board Minutes 1871-1903

21131/BSB/Adm/M/4, General Committee Minutes

21131/BSB/Adm/M/6, Sub-committee minutes (collated series)

21131/BSB/Adm/M/10, Blind and Deaf Children Committee minutes

21131/BSB/Adm/M/12, Technical Instruction Committee minutes

21131/BSB/Adm/R/1/1, Bristol School Board reports, 1871-1903

Bristol Archives; Bristol Education Committee, 1903 – 1974 sub-collection, 21131/EC including:

21131/EC/Adm/M/1/1, Minutes of the Special Committee to consider the Education Act, 1902

21131/EC/Adm/M/1/2, Minute book 1903-1912

21131/EC/Adm/M/1/3, Minute book 1912-1914

Bristol Archives, 40469/50, Bristol Women's Liberal Association (North Branch) rules, nd [c1888]

Bristol Archives 45934/162 Minute book of the Clifton Bristol & Counties Ladies Club Discussion Society, 1908-1914

Bristol Archives; 44277/1, Minute book of the West Bristol Women's Liberal Association 1904-1919

Bristol Archives, 46273, Records of the Clifton Colston habitation of the Primrose League, 1905-1921

Bristol Archives 10243, Welfare Committee, Guardians of the Poor minutes, 1901-1903

Bristol Reference Library

Bristol Reference Library, 34147, Bristol Women's Liberal Association Reports, 1882-1904

British Library

The Primrose League Gazette, 1887-1891 and 1907-1914

Census of England and Wales

Census for England and Wales 1901: Bristol, RG13/2358 via <
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed July 2023]

Census for England and Wales 1901: Bristol, RG13/2370 via <
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed July 2023]

Census for England and Wales 1911: Bristol, RG14/14917 via <
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed July 2023]

Census for England and Wales 1911: Bristol, RG14/14932 via <
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed October 2023]

Census for England and Wales 1911: Bristol, RG14/14950 via <
<https://www.findmypast.co.uk>> [accessed October 2023]

LSE Women's Library

LSE Women's Library, 2BWS, Records of the Bristol and West of England Society for Women's Suffrage, 1867-1910

LSE Women's Library PC/06/396-11/07, UDC Pamphlet Collection: Suffrage Pamphlets, 1872-1913, McIlquham, Mrs, *The Enfranchisement of Women: An Ancient Right, a Modern Need* (London: Women's Emancipation Union, 1891)

LSE Women's Library PC/06/396-11/07, UDC Pamphlet Collection: Suffrage Pamphlets, 1872-1913, 'To the Members of the Women's Liberal Federation', 1891

University of Bristol Special Collections

University of Bristol Special Collections, Women's Liberal Federation Archive, DM1193/1/1, Women's Liberal Federation Executive Committee Minute Book, 10 June 1910-9 July 1912

University of Bristol Special Collections, Women's Liberal Federation Archive, DM1193/4/1/1-5, Women's Liberal Federation Annual Reports and Council Meetings, 1888-1913

University of Bristol Special Collections, Women's Liberal Federation Archive, DM1193/4/4/1-3, *Women's Liberal Federation Monthly News*

Newspapers via www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk

Bristol Mercury

Bristol Times and Mirror

Clifton Society

The Englishwoman's Review: a Journal of Woman's Work

Western Daily Press

Women's Penny Paper

Printed Sources

Blackburn, Helen, *A Handbook for Women Engaged in Social and Political Work* (1881)

Blackburn, H, *Women's Suffrage: A record of the Women's Suffrage Movement in the British Isles* (London: Williams & Norgate, 1902)

Jackson, Edward, *A Study in Democracy: Being An Account of the Rise and Progress of Industrial Co-Operation in Bristol* (Manchester: Co-operative Wholesale Society's Printing Works, 1911)

Latimer, John, *The Annals of Bristol in the Nineteenth Century* (Bristol: printed for the author, 1887; repr. Bath: Kingsmead Reprint, 1970)

Tanner, S, *How the Women's Suffrage Movement Began in Bristol Fifty Years ago* (Bristol: Carlyle Press, 1918)

Tooley, S.A, *Ladies of Bristol and Clifton* (1896)

Williams, G.M, *Mary Clifford* (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1921)

Secondary Sources

Articles and chapters

Ball, Stuart, *The Conservative Party and British Politics 1902-51* (Harlow: Longman, 1995) pp1-54

Barrow, Margaret, 'Teetotal Feminists: Temperance Leadership and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage', in *A Suffrage Reader: Charting Directions in British Suffrage History*, ed. by Claire Eustance, Joan Ryan and Laura Ugolini (London: Leicester University Press, 2000)

Cook, Chris, *A Short History of the Liberal Party: the Road Back to Power*, 7th edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), pp.1-61

Hannam, June, '“An Enlarged Sphere of Usefulness”: the Bristol Women's Movement, c1860-1914', in *The Making of Modern Bristol*, ed. by Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 184 – 209

Hannam, June, 'Women in Politics', in *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945: an Introduction*, ed. by June Purvis (London: UCL Press, 1995), pp.217-245

Hannam, June and Moria Martin, 'Women in Bristol 1835-1914', in *Women and the City Bristol 1373-2000*, ed.by Madge Dresser (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 2016), pp.92-135

Harris, Bernard, *The Origins of the British Welfare State: State, Society and Social Welfare in England and Wales, 1800–1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2004), pp.1-165

Hirshfield, Claire, 'Fractured faith: Liberal party women and the suffrage issue in Britain, 1892 -1914', *Gender and History*, 2 (1990), 173-97

Hollis, Patricia, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space', in *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, ed. by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.192-213

Maguire, G.E., *Conservative Women: A History of Women and the Conservative Party 1874-1997* (Basingstoke, 1998), pp.1-65

Malos, Ellen, 'Bristol Women in Action, 1839-1919', in *Bristol's Other History*, ed. by I Bild, (Bristol: Bristol Broadsides, 1983), pp. 97-128

Martin, Moira, 'Single Women and Philanthropy: a case study of women's associational life in Bristol, 1880–1914', *Women's History Review*, 17:3 (2008), 395-417

Martin, Moira, 'Managing the Poor: The Administration of Poor Relief in Bristol in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Century', in *The Making of Modern Bristol* ed. by Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996), pp. 156-183

Meller, H., *Leisure and the Changing City 1870-1914* (London Routledge & Kegan 1976) pp.72-90

Pugh, Martin, 'The Liberal Party and women's suffrage, 1866-1918', *Journal of Liberal History*, 62 (2009), 16-22

Rendall, Jane, 'John Stuart Mill, Liberal Politics, and the Movements for Women's Suffrage, 1865-1873', in., *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present*, ed. by Amanda Vickery (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001), pp.168-200

Sykes, Alan, *The Rise and Fall of British Liberalism, 1776-1988* (London: Longman, 1997), pp.75-207

Thane, Pat, 'Women and the Poor Law in Victorian and Edwardian England', *History Workshop Journal*, 6 (1978), 29–51

Vervaecke, Philippe, 'The Primrose League and Women's Suffrage 1883-1918', in *Suffrage Outside Suffragism* ed. by Myriam Boussahba-Bravard (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.180-201

Walker, Linda, 'Blackburn, Helen', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Walker, Linda, 'Fry [nee Pease], Sophia, Lady Fry', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004)

Walker, Linda, 'Gender, Suffrage and Party: Liberal Women's Organisations 1880-1914' in *Suffrage Outside Suffragism*, ed. by Myriam Boussahba-Bravard (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), pp.78-101

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*, ed. by Jane Rendall (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987), pp.165-191

Books

Boussahba-Bravard, Myriam, ed. *Suffrage Outside Suffragism* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007)

Bryher, S., *An account of the labour and socialist movement in Bristol* (Bristol: 1929)

Caine, Barbara, *Victorian Feminists* (New York, OUP, 1992)

Cawood, Ian, *The Liberal Unionist Party: A History* (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2012)

Cowman, Krista, *Mrs Brown is a man and a brother: women in Merseyside's political organisations, 1890-1920* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2004)

Crawford, Elizabeth, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Britain and Ireland: A Regional Survey* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006)

Davidoff, Leonore, Megan Doolittle, Janet Fink, and Catherine Holden, *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830-1960* (London: Longman 1999)

Dresser, Madge and Philip Ollerenshaw, eds, *The Making of Modern Bristol* (Tiverton: Redcliffe Press, 1996)

Dyhouse, C., *Feminism and the family in England, 1880-1939* (Oxford, Blackwell, 1989)

Englander, David, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in Nineteenth Century Britain, 1834–1914* (London: Longman, 1998)

Gardner, Phil, *The Lost Elementary Schools of Victorian England: the People's Education* (London: Croom Helm, 1984)

Gorsky, M., *Patterns of Philanthropy: charity and society in nineteenth-century Bristol* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1999)

Hollis, Christina, *Struggle and Suffrage In Bristol: Women's lives and the fight for equality* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword History, 2019)

Hollis, Patricia, *Ladies Elect: Women in English Local Government, 1865-1914* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987)

Holton, Sandra, *Feminism and Democracy: Women's Suffrage and Reform Politics in Britain, 1900-1918* (Cambridge: CUP, 2002)

Holton, Sandra, *Suffrage Days: Stories from the Women's Suffrage Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996)

Levine, P., *Feminist Lives in Victorian England* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1988)

Prochaska, F., *Women and Philanthropy in 19th Century England* (Oxford: OUP, 1980)

Pugh, Martin, *The Tories and the People: 1880-1935* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1985)

Purvis, June, ed., *Women's History: Britain, 1850-1945: an Introduction* (London: UCL Press, 1995)

Rendall, Jane, ed., *Equal or Different: Women's Politics, 1800-1914*, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1987)

Robb, Janet, *The Primrose League, 1883-1906* (New York, 1942)

Scott, Gillian, *Feminism and the Politics of Working Women: the Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880s to the Second World War* (London: UCL Press, 1998)

Smitley, Megan, *The Feminine Public Sphere: Middle-class Women and Civic Life in Scotland, c.1870-1914* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2009)

Steinbach, Susie, *Women in England 1760-1914: A Social History* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 2004)

Vickery, Amanda, ed., *Women, Privilege and Power: British Politics, 1750 to the Present* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2001)

Pamphlets

Butcher, E. E., *Bristol Corporation of the Poor* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1972) [Historical Association pamphlet no 29]

Gibson, Cyril, *The Bristol School Board: 1871-1903* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1997) [Historical Association pamphlet no 93]

Large, David, *Bristol and the New Poor Law* (Bristol Branch of the Historical Association, 1995) [Historical Association pamphlet no 86]

Large, David, *The Municipal Government of Bristol 1851-1901* (Bristol: Bristol Record Society, 1999)

Penny, John, *All The News That's Fit to Print: A Short History of Bristol's Newspapers since 1702* (Bristol: Bristol Historical Association, 2001)

Theses

Auchterlonie, Mitzi Marita, 'Conservative Women, the Conservative Party, and the Campaign for Women's Suffrage, 1867-1914' (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Exeter, 2002)

Cowman, Krista, "Engendering Citizenship", The Political Involvement of Women on Merseyside, 1890 – 1920 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of York, 1994)

Jesman, Christine Margaret, Conservative women, the Primrose league and public activity in Surrey and Sussex, C. 1880 – 1902 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of Sussex, 2008)

Masson, Ursula, 'For women, for Wales and for Liberalism': women in Liberal politics in Wales c.1883-1914 (unpublished doctoral thesis, University of the West of England, Bristol, 2007)

Course materials

Lawrence, Paul, 'Block 6: Poverty and welfare', *A825 MA History Part 1*, 2nd edn (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2009), pp. 1-38

Weinbren, Daniel, 'Block 5: The Roles of Families', *A825 MA History Part 1*, 2nd edn (Milton Keynes: The Open University, 2009), pp. 1-3

