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‘There Is Nothing Like a Dame’: To what extent did involvement in the Cardiff Primrose League Habitations shape Conservative women’s national and civic identities between 1885 and 1914?

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7000 words

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Cardiff underwent rapid growth in the nineteenth century, with a population that expanded from 'less than 2,000' in 1801 to 128,915 in 1895, culminating in a population of 209,635 in 1911. After the first two Reform Acts of 1832 and 1867, Cardiff's electorate expanded from 5,388 in 1868 to 12,605 in 1885, and again to 28,723 in 1910.¹ During Cardiff's evolution from borough town into city, expansion led to both municipal and parliamentary boundary changes,² creating a 'heterogeneous electorate... uncertain in their allegiance',³ which contributed to the perception of Cardiff as Anglicised, rather than Welsh.⁴ This, in turn, prompted civic leaders to emphasise the Welshness of Cardiff in their bid to centre the town as the 'Metropolis of Wales' during the 1890s.⁵ The largest town in Wales in 1871,⁶ Cardiff had a strong commercial focus, with its middle and working classes benefiting from Victorian associational society; trade directory records of political club membership, whilst needing to be treated with caution due to the bias inherent in what are essentially paid entries, show that support for the Conservatives and Unionists surpassed the Liberals in 1895.⁷ Taken together, these factors encouraged the Conservatives, both locally and nationally, to focus on Cardiff as a winnable borough; by 1895 the national Grand Council of the Primrose League complained that it had invested £500 of district agent wages, pamphlets and speakers' expenses in an effort to ensure a Conservative or Unionist MP for Cardiff, despite receiving only £40 in contributions from the various Welsh Habitations.⁸

¹ Kelly & Co., *Kelly's Directory of Monmouthshire & S Wales, 1895. [Part 1: Monmouthshire Directory & South Wales Localities]* (London, 1895), p.132. Available at: <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/337093>, Accessed: 09 April 2020; Arnold J. James & John E. Thomas, *Wales At Westminster: A history of the Parliamentary representation of Wales 1800-1879* (Dyfed, 1981).

² Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City', pp.368-369.

³ Kenneth O. Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922* (Oxford, 1991), p.65.

⁴ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City', pp.367, 387.

⁵ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City', pp.370-371.

⁶ Neil Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City: The Middle Class and Civil and National Consciousness in Cardiff, 1850-1914', *Welsh History Review*, vol.12 (1984), p.352.

⁷ Kelly, *Directory of Monmouthshire & S Wales, 1895*, p.131.

⁸ Anon., 'Dissatisfied with Wales', in *South Wales Daily News*, (15 December 1893), p.7; Anon., 'Forthcoming Primrose League Meeting at Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (23 January 1890), p.3; Anon., 'Primrose League:

The Primrose League was created as a voluntary organisation in response to the *Corrupt Electoral Practices Act 1883*.⁹ Women were admitted as members from 1884 and the separate Ladies Grand Council was instituted in 1885. Any Dame or Dame Associate could join the Ladies Grand Council on payment of the annual one guinea membership fee; 10 middle-class Cardiff Dames did so between 1888 and 1894. Although a mixed-sex organisation, both Conservatives and Liberals saw the Primrose League as a women-dominated activist group, a perception that barely applied to Cardiff with its 52% of female activists across all Habitations. In 1887, Cardiff trade directories listed a Divisional Council and five Habitations, the first being founded in 1885; a separate women-only Dames Habitation existed between 1890 and 1895.¹⁰ From 1895 onwards, Cardiff had a single Habitation with various ward branches; this Habitation was renamed in 1908, which, coupled with a decline in local news reporting, suggests a loss of key activists. This dissertation analyses the growth and decline of Cardiff's Primrose League Habitations from the perspective of its female activists.

By examining the relationships between the Conservative organisations and the Primrose League in Cardiff, this dissertation will produce a detailed analysis of the intersection of political activism and its effects on the complex identities of Conservative women in the Cardiff and Glamorgan constituencies between 1885 and 1914, with a specific focus on understanding the nuances of their active political involvement with the Cardiff Primrose League Habitations during this period. It will demonstrate an understanding of the range of gendered activism available to Conservative women in the Cardiff and Glamorgan constituencies by examining how Welsh Conservative women interacted with societal constraints surrounding political activism, how much of Primrose League activism was an offshoot of the wider British movement, and the factors affecting the success of the local Cardiff Habitations.

Important Demonstration to be held at Cardiff', in *Evening Express*, (11 January 1895), p.1; Anon., 'Y Toriaid Yn Achwyn Ar Gymru', in *Tarian Y Gweithiwr*, (21 December 1893), p.1.

⁹ Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935*, pp.11-15.

¹⁰ Anon., 'Forthcoming Primrose League Meeting at Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (23 January 1890), p.3.

By defining the parameters of Conservative women's activism in Cardiff between 1885 and 1914, in order to understand how that activism shaped Conservative women's intersecting identities during the period under discussion, my case study of Conservative women's activism in Cardiff and Glamorgan will contribute to an ongoing corpus of analysis around local political activism in Wales during a period of urban growth and socio-political change. The historiographical focus on women's activism in Wales tends towards the Liberal hegemony of the nineteenth century and the Labour activists of the early twentieth century.¹¹ Very little has been written about Conservative women's engagement with key Welsh or feminist causes, and the historiography of the Primrose League and Edwardian Conservatism eschews detailed analysis of Wales.¹²

Chapter 2 will consider the demographic, socio-economic and political factors affecting gendered political and philanthropic activism in Cardiff between 1885 and 1914, building on existing historiography surrounding national and civic identities in Wales, including Cragoe's and Morgan's analyses of the development and recognition of Welsh nationality during the period covered in this dissertation.¹³ Evans' analyses of Cardiff¹⁴ provided insight into its hybrid civic identity, as did Jenkins' summary of the interplay

¹¹ Ursula Masson, *For Women, for Wales and for Liberalism: Women in Liberal Politics in Wales 1880-1914* (Cardiff, 2010); Ryland Wallace, *Organise, Organise, Organise! A Study of Reform Agitations in Wales, 1840-1886* (Cardiff, 1996); Ryland Wallace, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Wales 1866-1928* (Cardiff, 2009); Ursula Masson, 'Political conditions in Wales are quite different...' party politics and votes for women in Wales, 1912-15', *Women's History Review*, vol.9(2) (2000), pp.369-388; Ursula Masson, 'Hand in hand with the women, forward we will go': Welsh nationalism and feminism in the 1890s', *Women's History Review*, vol.12(3) (2003), pp. 357-386; Angela V. John, (ed.), *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1939* (Cardiff, 2011).

¹² Martin Pugh, *The Tories and the People 1880-1935* (Oxford, 1985); Janet Henderson Robb, *The Primrose League 1883-1906*, (Columbia, 1942); Diana Sheets, *British Conservatism and the Primrose League: The Changing Character of Popular Politics, 1883-1901* (unpublished PhD Thesis, Columbia, 1986); Jeremy Smith, *The Taming of Democracy: The Conservative Party, 1880-1924* (Cardiff, 1997); David Thackeray, 'Home and Politics: Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth-Century Britain', *Journal of British Studies*, vol.49(4) (2010), pp.826-848. Williams, *The Conservative party in north-east Wales, 1906-1924*; Daniel Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy* (Cambridge, 2017).

¹³ Martin Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886* (Oxford, 2004); Morgan, *Wales in British Politics 1868-1922*; Pelling, Henry, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910* (London, 1967).

¹⁴ Neil Evans, 'Urbanisation, Elite Attitudes and Philanthropy: Cardiff, 1850-1914', *International Review of Social History*, vol. 27(3) (1982), pp. 290-323; Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City'.

between civic and gendered identity in Cardiff.¹⁵ Cardiff projected a civic image that used gendered representations to emphasise a civilised and moral civic identity which mirrored contemporary Welsh and English concepts of femininity.¹⁶ Jenkins argues that class-based models of womanhood supported a 'contest for power' within Cardiff society,¹⁷ and that provision for women to engage publicly in civic socio-political participation was used by various factions to define the role of women during the period under discussion.¹⁸

Between 1885 and 1914, changes relating to electoral practices, municipal and constituency boundaries, and eligibility for civic roles, prompted increased political participation by women in Cardiff and Glamorgan.¹⁹ The Redistribution of Seats Act 1885 and the General Elections of 1885 and 1886 acted as a springboard for local Primrose League recruitment in Wales,²⁰ with the quantity and effectiveness of Welsh Primrose League Habitations varying according to constituency. Chapter 3 analyses the growth and peak of Cardiff Primrose League Habitation activity, and attempts to identify the local and national factors involved in its decline.

Following on from the previous chapter's analysis, chapter 4 examines to what extent Conservative women's political activism in Cardiff changed focus from the mid-1890s and during the first years of the twentieth century, and the factors involved. Building on the insight provided by Wallace, Masson and John into gendered activism in Wales,²¹ this

¹⁵ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports'.

¹⁶ Beth Jenkins, "'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports': the intersection of gender and civic identity in Cardiff, c.1880-1914', *Women's History Review*, vol.23(6) (2014), pp.905-906.

¹⁷ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports', p.907.

¹⁸ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports', pp.908-912.

¹⁹ Ursula Masson, *For Women, for Wales and for Liberalism: Women in Liberal Politics in Wales 1880-1914'* (Cardiff, 2010)

²⁰ Thomas W. Williams, *The Conservative party in north-east Wales, 1906-1924*, (unpublished PhD thesis, Liverpool, 2008), p.175.

²¹ Ryland Wallace, *'Organise, Organise, Organise! A Study of Reform Agitations in Wales, 1840-1886'* (Cardiff, 1996); Ryland Wallace, *The Women's Suffrage Movement in Wales 1866-1928* (Cardiff, 2009); Ursula Masson, "'Political conditions in Wales are quite different...': party politics and votes for women in Wales, 1912-15', *Women's History Review*, vol.9(2) (2000), pp.369-388; Ursula Masson, "Hand in hand with the women, forward

chapter shows that the parochial networks of Welsh Conservative women were utilised to support the transition to other forms of political activism under the cross-class cultural model²² originated by the Primrose League.

This dissertation thus addresses the paucity of historiographical focus on Welsh Conservatism between 1885 and 1914, by undertaking an analysis of the effect of Conservative women's political activism within the societal constraints imposed by a large town that was developing its own hybrid identity. It argues that the parochial networks of middle-class activists were instrumental in promoting a model of activism focused on cultural commonalities that transcended class boundaries. This cultural model provided a template for ongoing non-partisan activism that allowed Welsh Conservative women to transfer allegiance to other groups in accordance with their interests, whilst maintaining intersecting national and civic identities in accordance with Welsh societal norms.

we will go': Welsh nationalism and feminism in the 1890s', *Women's History Review*, vol.12(3) (2003), pp. 357–386; Angela V. John, (ed.), *Our Mothers' Land: Chapters in Welsh Women's History 1830-1939* (Cardiff, 2011)

²² Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*.

Chapter 2: Demographic, socio-economic and political factors affecting gendered political and philanthropic activism in Cardiff 1885-1914

The rapid growth experienced by Cardiff during the nineteenth century, fuelled by its development from a small market town of 1,871 inhabitants into a globally-focused commercial port,²³ provided the impetus for its substantial and diverse middle class to shape Cardiff's built environment in accordance with their imagined community, a global Anglo-Welsh cosmopolitan hub.²⁴ Faced with fears that accelerating socio-economic growth would overwhelm both Cardiff's infrastructure and its moral foundations,²⁵ Cardiff's municipal corporation 'annexed' Canton, Grangetown, Cathays, Roath and Splott in 1875,²⁶ and instigated a series of building and civil engineering projects. As new middle-class residential areas expanded, the municipal perception of Cardiff as the 'Metropolis of Wales' defined the town's hybrid identity, rooted as much in its cosmopolitan English-speaking population as its position as Wales' key commercial centre and export port. Cardiff's identity was thus founded on an urban nineteenth-century middle-class identity, expressed through civic pride.

The complexities of Cardiff's civic identity reflected the complexities of Welsh womanhood in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Welsh nationalists promoted an image of Welsh women as chaste, and hard-working, as a counter to the portrayal of immoral Welsh women in the 1847 *Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the State of Education in Wales*.²⁷ Cardiff's middle-class, however, also utilised an anglicised model of femininity with women as a civilising domestic buttress against the corrupting

²³ C. Roy Lewis, 'A stage in the Development of the Industrial Town: A Case Study of Cardiff, 1845-75', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol.4(2) (1979), pp.129-152.

²⁴ Lewis, 'A Case Study of Cardiff'; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 2016[1983]).

²⁵ Evans, 'Urbanisation, Elite Attitudes and Philanthropy', pp.298-299.

²⁶ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City'; Dennis Morgan, *The Illustrated History of Cardiff's Suburbs* (Derby, 2003).

²⁷ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales*, pp.42-49; Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Ports', p.905.

influence of political and industrial life²⁸. In both cases, upholding and protecting female morality took precedence over the full integration of women into public life; women were expected to engage in civic life with decorum, through domestic influence, rather than the 'unattractive pressure' associated with Radical speakers.²⁹ Civic womanhood in Cardiff was thus defined by the intersection of two national gender models, the combination of which was used to define a cosmopolitan civic persona. Cardiff projected a civic image that used gendered representations to emphasise a civilised and moral civic identity which mirrored contemporary Welsh and English concepts of femininity.³⁰

Cardiff's civic persona during the period under discussion was repeatedly defined as one of enlightened, refined femininity.³¹ An illustration in *Evening Express* makes this clear; Cardiff is portrayed as a statuesque blonde woman in a Grecian robe, wearing a sash marked "Cardiff" and a tessellated crown.³² She is stood apart from a group of naval architects, who were in Cardiff for a conference; the caption reads, "Teaching Cardiff a thing or two in shipping matters". With her left hand on her hip, and her right hand touching her mouth in a classic self-silencing gesture, this allegorical personification of Cardiff is used by the newspaper to express its editor's ambiguity relating to the conference. The Naval Architects Institute was a prestigious organisation, whose conference reflected on the municipal perception of Cardiff's prestige.³³ However, the newspaper's readership, including Cardiff's ship-owning middle class, were less accommodating of the Institute's perceived superiority.³⁴ The gendered portrayal of Cardiff in this illustration invokes classic Greek or Roman statuary; it reinforces a perception of Cardiff as a metropolis akin to Rome or Athens, whilst also emphasising the refined feminine behaviour expected of its female

²⁸ Jane Aaron, *Nineteenth Century Women's Writing in Wales: Nation, Gender, Identity* (Cardiff, 2010), p.6; Anon., 'A Paper by Lady Westbury', in *The Western Mail*, (22 November 1889), p.3.

²⁹ Lord Windsor, quoted in 'Ladies Column' in *Primrose League Gazette*, (17 December 1887), p.3; T. Lennox Irwin, 'Woman's Influence in Politics', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (24 December 1887), p.10; Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales 1832-1886*.

³⁰ Beth Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports': the intersection of gender and civic identity in Cardiff, c.1880-1914', *Women's History Review*, vol.23(6) (2014), pp.905-906.

³¹ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports', pp.906-908.

³² Anon. 'The Naval Architects', in *Evening Express*, (12 July 1893), p.2.

³³ Anon., 'The Visit of the Naval Architects to Cardiff', in *South Wales Echo*, (21 April 1893), p.3.

³⁴ Anon., 'The Naval Architects at Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (11 July 1893), p.4.

residents. Cardiff's gendered persona was a 'visible, yet separate, component of the civic scene'.³⁵

It follows that Cardiff's civic persona influenced building projects during this period. Considering civic pride as an expression of Cardiff's diverse urban middle-class identity,³⁶ those involved in the construction of Cardiff's built environment wished to promote Cardiff as a global metropolis, commensurate with Cardiff's civic persona and its imagined community. This entailed the construction of prestige commercial buildings as well as the negotiations surrounding the siting of the University College of South Wales and Monmouthshire and the National Library and Museum.³⁷ It is in the construction of Cardiff's commercial sector that we can determine the socio-economic constraints surrounding gendered activism between 1885 and 1914.

In 1882, the Park Hall and Hotel Company was formed with the aim of building a commercial public hall and adjoining hotel.³⁸ Directors included the Marquess of Bute's land agent, James Howell, the department store magnate, and John Gunn, shipowner and future Liberal Unionist candidate for Cardiff in the 1892 General Election. By October 1884, the company had opened a complex that included 'a first class hotel, ...nine commodious shops', and a sizeable coffee tavern, as well as two imposing halls, the largest of which was 127ft long, 64ft wide and 53ft high (or 38.7m long, 29.5m wide and 16.15m high) with an upper balcony that ran around 3 of the walls.³⁹ Unsurprisingly, the local Conservative press waxed eloquently that Cardiff's 'unparalleled commercial enterprise' was 'equalled by the beauty of its architectural adornments'.⁴⁰ Commercially, the project was a success; both halls were regularly used by conference organisers and political organisations, although reports on whether these conferences and demonstrations were over-subscribed, at the Park Hall or

³⁵ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports', p.906.

³⁶ Simon Morgan, 'John Deakin Heaton and the 'elusive civic pride of the Victorian middle class'', *Urban History*, vol.45(4), (2018), p.596.

³⁷ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City', pp.372-374.

³⁸ Anon., 'New Local Company', in *South Wales Daily News*, (18 December 1882), p.3.

³⁹ Anon., 'Architectural Improvements', in *The Western Mail*, (25 October 1884), p.4.

⁴⁰ Anon., 'Architectural Improvements'

elsewhere, tended to vary according to the political bias of the news editors.⁴¹ Ideologically, the Park Hall and Park Hotel subscribed to the prevailing models of feminine engagement with public life epitomised by Cardiff's allegorical persona.⁴² Men had access to the full range of facilities, whilst ladies had two separate coffee rooms within the hotel; women who wished to attend Conservative or Primrose League meetings in the Park Hall complex were expected to arrive early by separate entrances, and congregate in the balcony area.⁴³ It may be seen that middle-class women, at least, embraced the constraints of separate accommodation; organisers of the "Ladies Club" pavilion in the 1896 Cardiff Exhibition grounds defined the success of the venture by the 160 one guinea subscriptions received,⁴⁴ whilst meetings were convened in 1910 to discuss the establishment of a 'Ladies County Club' to provide gender-segregated discussion spaces.⁴⁵ The flexibility afforded within Cardiff's political activism by gendered segregation within the built environment will be expanded upon in Chapters 3 and 4, but it should be noted that construction of Cardiff's numerous Conservative clubs between 1883 and 1891 focused exclusively on male activists' 'requirements of social club life'.⁴⁶ By contrast, the design for the Newport Conservative club, built in 1893, included rooms for both the Primrose League and a 'ladies club'.⁴⁷

The third component of middle-class civic pride, philanthropy,⁴⁸ experienced a similar gender divide in Cardiff, although this was little different to the general British experience at the time.⁴⁹ Cardiff's upper and middle class gentlemen were involved at Board level on local

⁴¹ Anon., 'The Liberal Victory in Glamorgan', in *South Wales Echo*, (8 February 1886), p.2; Anon., 'The Welsh Campaign', in *South Wales Daily News*, (8 July 1895), p.6; Anon., 'Church Defence Meeting at Cardiff', in *Weekly Mail*, (26 February 1887), p.3.

⁴² Simon Morgan, "A sort of land debatable': female influence, civic virtue and middle-class identity, c.1830-c.1860', *Women's History Review*, vol.13(2), (2004).

⁴³ Anon., 'The Primrose League', in *South Wales Daily News*, (29 November 1887), p.3; Anon., 'Conservatism at Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (25 January 1895), p.6.

⁴⁴ Anon., 'Cardiff Exhibition Ladies Club', in *South Wales Daily News*, (18 April 1896), p.4

⁴⁵ Anon., 'A Ladies' Club', in *The Cardiff Times*, (2 April 1910), p.11.

⁴⁶ Anon., 'Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (29 November 1893), p.12.

⁴⁷ Anon., 'Newport New Constitutional Club', in *The Western Mail*, (29 November 1893), p.12.

⁴⁸ Morgan, 'John Deakin Heaton', p.596-597.

⁴⁹ Simon Morgan, "A sort of land debatable", p.185.

hospitals, benefit societies, dispensaries, police and civic building committees,⁵⁰ whilst women were restricted to those activities perceived as related to the domestic sphere – acting as ‘lady visitors’, fundraising for local and national charities, providing Christmas meals to the poor, or sewing items for Infirmary use.⁵¹ Significantly, there were no Cardiff women on the local School Boards, despite their eligibility.⁵² Examining the regional newspaper reports, it is evident that both male and female philanthropic associational societies utilised print media to engage with the public to raise funds and recruit new members. The bazaar in aid of the reserve fund for the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, organised and promoted by South Glamorgan gentry including Lady Windsor and Lady Dunraven, raised £2623, due to interest generated by several reports in local newspapers.⁵³ By comparing reports for fundraising activities for the Cardiff Friendless Girls’ Home, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, and the Cardiff Lifeboat Saturday Fund,⁵⁴ a picture emerges of a nonpartisan female network founded on common cultural principles. This network provided middle-class women with access to upper-class influencers; there is little data available on whether working class women also benefited. Rather than hindering women’s activism, the segregated, parochial, philanthropic networks formed by Cardiff’s middle-class women throughout the 1880s and 1890s were key to the success of their political activism between 1885 and 1914.

With regards to the historiography relating to civic and national identity, both Morgan and Cragoe support the contention that Welsh identity was seen by its adherents within the context of a wider British and Imperial identity during the period under investigation.⁵⁵ Evans’ research into Cardiff’s civic identity provides a more detailed analysis relating to the

⁵⁰ Anon., ‘Police Institute, Cardiff’, in *Evening Express*, (3 March 1897), p.4; Anon., ‘Cardiff and County Conservative Working Men’s Superannuation and Benefit Society’, in *The Western Mail*, (13 June 1891), p.4; Daniel Owen & Co., *Cardiff Directory 1887-1888*, pp.30-33.

⁵¹ Anon., ‘Cardiff’, in *South Wales Daily News*, (1 January 1881), p.3; Anon. ‘Infirmary Needlework Guild’, in *South Wales Daily News*, (25 October 1894), p.7.

⁵² Ursula Masson, *For Women, for Wales and for Liberalism: Women in Liberal Politics in Wales 1880-1914* (Cardiff, 2010)

⁵³ Anon., ‘The Man About Town’, in *South Wales Echo*, (7 July 1897), p.2;

⁵⁴ Anon., ‘Friendless Girls’ Home’, in *South Wales Echo*, (3 December 1895), p.3; Anon., ‘Prevention of Cruelty’, in *South Wales Daily News*, (27 August 1895), p.6; Anon., ‘Cardiff Lifeboat Saturday Fund’, in *The Cardiff Times*, (30 September 1893), p.7.

⁵⁵ Cragoe, *Culture, Politics and National Identity in Wales*; Morgan, *Wales in British Politics*, pp.306-307; Kenneth O. Morgan, *Rebirth of a Nation: Wales 1880-1890*, (Oxford, 1980).

rise and rapid decline of *Cymru Fydd's* brand of nationalism in Cardiff,⁵⁶ reinforcing the arguments of Cragoe and Morgan that Cardiff was more focused on a Welsh civic identity that allowed for global interaction at an imperial level, rather than what could be perceived as isolationism from the 'Young Wales' nationalists. Jenkins links civic identity with gendered associational society to suggest that women engaged in the gendering of Cardiff's civic built environment to further shape its 'ambiguous identity',⁵⁷ but eschews analysis that would provide a non-Liberal perspective. The missing element in the current historiography is that of Welsh Conservatism. Whilst Cragoe offers some balance by focusing on the political process, Morgan, Evans, and Jenkins effectively silenced Conservative voices of the period under investigation by foregrounding the prevailing Liberal Nonconformist perspective. Examination of contemporary regional and local news reports, together with the paid entries in those Trade Directories covering Cardiff from 1885-1914, whilst biased towards promoting the partisan political views of Cardiff's male middle-class, provides an alternate perspective. Faced with an entrenched Liberalism from 1880 onwards, Conservatives in Wales chose to engage with political competition by defining their own national and civic identities.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City', pp.376-377.

⁵⁷ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports'.

⁵⁸ Ziblatt, *Conservative Parties and the Birth of Democracy*; Smith, *The Taming of Democracy: The Conservative Party, 1880-1924*.

Chapter 3: Primrose Dames – Conservative women’s political activity in Cardiff 1885-1895

Electoral reform during the mid-1880s changed the democratic balance in South Wales. The *Corrupt Practices Act 1883* banned the payment of canvassers, treating, and paid transport to the polls, imposing punitive fines on Parliamentary candidates and their agents.⁵⁹ The *Representation of the People Act 1884* and the *Redistribution of Seats Act 1885* increased the county franchise, with Glamorganshire split into four constituencies;⁶⁰ Glamorgan South encompassed those districts that bordered Cardiff. Cardiff benefited from a realignment of its Parliamentary boundary to coincide with its municipal boundary, which had grown in 1875 to include Cathays, Canton, Roath, Grangetown and Splott.⁶¹ A self-governing borough since 1836, Cardiff’s municipal wards were doubled from five to ten in 1889, as part of the reorganisation following the *Local Government Act 1888*. The net result was to entrench Liberal politics at both the municipal and Parliamentary levels; see Table 1.

| Constituency | General Election | | | | | | | | Six-election average |
|-----------------|------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------------|------------|----------------------|
| | 1885 | 1886 | 1892 | 1895 | 1900 | 1906 | 1910 (Jan) | 1910 (Dec) | |
| Wales | 39.6 | 41.6 | 41.4 | 43.6 | 35.0 | 30.3 | 32.6 | 30.1 | 38.6 |
| Glamorgan South | 45.9 | 38.4 | 44.6 | 53.9 | 52.0 | 36.7 | 39.0 | 41.6 | 45.3 |
| Cardiff | 49.4 | 48.3 | 47.5 | 52.6 | 47.8 | 43.1 | 46.9 | 50.6 | 47.9 |

Table 1: Conservative and Unionist Vote as a Percentage of the Total Poll ⁶²

⁵⁹ Cornelius O’Leary, *The Elimination of Corrupt Practices in British Elections 1868-1911*, (Oxford, 1962); Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, pp.36-38.

⁶⁰ James & Thomas, *Wales At Westminster*

⁶¹ Morgan, *The Illustrated History of Cardiff’s Suburbs*

⁶² Collated from data presented in Pelling, *Social Geography of British Elections 1885-1910*

The Primrose League was formed in November 1883 as a response to the *Corrupt Practices Act*. A parallel organisation to the National Union of Conservative and Constitutional Associations, it was regarded with suspicion by some Conservatives due to its refusal to affiliate and its insistence that it would support any candidate that in turn supported its principles.⁶³ In practice, the Primrose League only supported Conservative and Unionist candidates; any tendency for the organisation towards independent activism was curtailed by the installation of leading Conservatives on the League's managing Grand Council.⁶⁴ Sir Edward Stock Hill, MP for Bristol South, whose wife and daughters were involved as Habitation officers with Cardiff and South Glamorgan Primrose League Habitations, was a member of the Grand Council, and instrumental in later changes to the operation of said Habitations. Deliberately hierarchical in nature, the Primrose League created an organisation comprised of Knights, Dames, and Associates of either sex. Fees were typically 2s 6d per year for a Knight or Dame, and 1s per year for an Associate.⁶⁵ Primrose League branches, known as Habitations, could be formed by any group that wished to do so, subject to twelve Knights or Dames applying and paying the Warrant fee of £1.⁶⁶ Annual fee renewals paid by active Knights and Dames, known as Tributes, were a source of irritation to both Grand Council and the Secretaries of individual Habitations, due to the resistance of members to pay their dues.⁶⁷

Cardiff Conservatives were amongst the earliest adopters of Primrose League principles; the Cardiff Habitation was founded in April 1885. Other Habitations followed rapidly, see Table 2, below. By January 1888, Owen's *Cardiff Advertising Directory* listed a claim that Cardiff Habitations totalled 'over 1000 members', 347 of which belonged to the original Cardiff Habitation;⁶⁸ a Divisional Council had been formed to manage communication between the five Habitations. Two months later, at the first Cathays

⁶³ Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, pp.16-17, 36.

⁶⁴ Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, p.213.

⁶⁵ Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, p.25; Anon., 'Cardiff Primrose Habitation', in *The Western Mail*, (17 April 1885), p.4

⁶⁶ Janet Henderson Robb, *The Primrose League 1883-1906*

⁶⁷ Anon., 'Tributes to the Central Office', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (24 December 1887), pp.4-5.

⁶⁸ Owen & Co., *Cardiff Directory 1887*, (Cardiff 1887). Available at: <http://specialcollections.le.ac.uk/digital/collection/p16445coll4/id/92771>, Accessed: 14 September 2020

Habitation annual dinner, the Cardiff Divisional Council president claimed seven Habitations and 'nearly 2,000 members'.⁶⁹ Canton Habitation listed a schoolteacher as the only female committee member; all other Cardiff Habitation officers were male.⁷⁰ Examination of news reports and articles between 1885 and 1888 confirms that gendered activism in Cardiff Habitations was overwhelmingly male, with only two female members identified, one of which was the wife of the Cardiff Divisional Council president.⁷¹ By contrast, the Wyndham Habitation reported a female Ruling Councillor (equivalent to a society chairman), 65 Knights, 55 Dames and 1,093 Associates in 1887, crediting Mrs Rose Lewis, the Ruling Councillor, as the driving force, supported by her husband.⁷²

| Year | Cardiff Habitations | Year | South Glamorgan Habitations |
|------|---------------------|------|-----------------------------|
| 1885 | Cardiff | 1886 | Wyndham |
| 1886 | Canton | 1886 | Penarth |
| 1886 | Roath | 1887 | Ely |
| 1887 | Cathays | 1888 | Upper Ely |
| 1887 | Newtown | 1893 | East Wyndham |
| 1887 | Grangetown | 1893 | West Wyndham |
| 1887 | Docks | | |
| 1890 | Clive (Dames) | | |
| 1895 | Cardiff United | | |
| 1908 | Ninian Stuart | | |

Table 2: Foundation year of Cardiff and adjacent South Glamorganshire Habitations⁷³

⁶⁹ Anon., 'Primrose League Dinner At Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (14 March 1888), p.2.

⁷⁰ Owen & Co., *Cardiff Directory 1887*, p.35.

⁷¹ Anon., 'Cardiff Primrose Habitation', in *The Western Mail*, (17 April 1885), p.4; Anon., 'Promotions', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (7 January 1888), p.7; Anon., 'Ladies Grand Council', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (14 January 1888), p.3.

⁷² Anon., 'Primrose League Fete at Cardiff', (6 August 1887), p.6.

⁷³ Collated from Pugh, *The Tories and the People*, pp.249-250, *Primrose League Gazette*, (11 January 1890), p.2; Anon., 'Local Jottings', *The Western Mail*, (24 March 1886), p.2.

It may be seen that the Cardiff Primrose League Habitations were shaped by the personalities of the men involved in their conception; these founder Knights were, in turn, influenced by Cardiff's civic identity. Many were members of the Cardiff Conservative Association, some were councillors.⁷⁴ The Divisional President, manager of a brick company,⁷⁵ appears to have been a social climber, acquiring two Grand Star awards and encouraging his wife to join the Ladies Grand Council at a fee of one guinea per year, by early 1888.⁷⁶ It is unclear why so few women became activists in the first few years of the Cardiff Habitations, although the bias of the Liberal and Radical press against the Primrose League may have been a contributory factor. Between 1883 and 1886, news articles claimed, *inter alia*, that the Primrose League was both a secret society and 'savours more of the 'Ku Klux Klan'', and that it duped and bullied the unfortunate working class into joining.⁷⁷ The *Baner ac Amserau Cymru* insisted that 'those young ladies, who lay themselves out to die unmarried... Let them wear the primrose and join' the Primrose League,⁷⁸ the suggestion being that Welsh women could not easily reconcile Primrose League activism with moral femininity. The lack of coherent Primrose League activism was reflected in the 1885 and 1886 election results; Cardiff's Liberal MP increased his slim majority in 1886, having lost ground in 1885. By December 1887, over 400 men and women had attended a Cardiff combined Habitations picnic in the Forest of Dean,⁷⁹ whilst more had attended a major mass meeting at Park Hall, with the balcony 'reserved exclusively for ladies, who came in force' to hear speakers give political speeches, including jokes about Radical slurs on Primrose Dames.⁸⁰ Attendance at social events and mass demonstrations cannot be deemed to indicate the level of inherent activism at a given point in time, but it

⁷⁴ Anon., 'The Cardiff Primrose League', in *The Western Mail*, (15 May 1885), p.3; Anon., 'Cardiff Primrose League', in *The Western Mail*, (12 June 1885), p.3; Anon., 'Annual Dinner of the Cardiff Primrose League', in *Weekly Mail*, (8 May 1886), p.3.

⁷⁵ Anon., 'Local Patents', in *Evening Express*, (31 January 1893), p.3.

⁷⁶ Anon., 'Awards', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (12 November 1887), p.5; Anon., 'Awards', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (19 November 1887), p.5; Anon., 'Ladies Grand Council', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (14 January 1888), p.3.

⁷⁷ Anon., 'A Word to Lady Liberals', in *South Wales Echo*, (4 January 1886), p.2; Anon., 'London Letter', in *South Wales Daily News*, (26 November 1883), p.2; Anon., 'Chat and Gossip', in *The Pontypridd Chronicle and Workman's News*, (28 May 1886), p.8.

⁷⁸ Anon., 'The Primrose League', in *Baner ac Amserau Cymru*, (7 August 1886), p.3.

⁷⁹ Anon., 'Cardiff Primrose League Picnic', in *Weekly Mail*, (23 July 1887), p.6

⁸⁰ Anon., 'Great Primrose Demonstration at Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (29 November 1887).

points toward increased acceptance that Cardiff Conservative women could maintain their hybrid Anglo-Welsh feminine morality whilst still attending public political meetings.

Little was reported, in either the local newspapers or the Primrose League Gazette, regarding Cardiff Conservative women's political activism prior to 1890. Both Liberals and Conservatives saw the Primrose League as an organisation where women could participate in political activism in a way that maintained their femininity within societal constraints,⁸¹ but in contrast to English Habitations, which reported on women sharing the platform with men and engaging in public speaking on political subjects,⁸² Cardiff and South Glamorganshire women activists were generally reported as providing musical or theatrical entertainment after the political element of Habitation meetings.⁸³ Scrutiny of Primrose League honours awarded to Conservative and Unionist women for activism in Cardiff between 1886 and 1890 suggests that women either chose not to get actively involved in the typical tasks of canvassing voters and distribution of leaflets, or that their efforts were unappreciated. A common thread in news reports between 1885 and 1890 is the usurpation of Conservative activity by Primrose League activists.⁸⁴ Coupled with complaints that Conservatives were incapable of organising well enough to win an election,⁸⁵ these reports suggest that a factor in the perceived inactivity of Conservative women may have been the inability of the male activists to collaborate with their purely Conservative counterparts.

By 1890, realising that, despite regular exhortations to Cardiff Habitation officers,⁸⁶ women activists were not being sufficiently utilised,⁸⁷ the local gentry co-opted members of

⁸¹ Linda Walker 'Party Political Women: A Comparative Study of Liberal Women and the Primrose League, 1890-1914', in Jane Rendall (ed.), *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800-1914*, (Oxford, 1987), pp.165-191; Anon., 'The Man About Town', in *South Wales Echo*, (13 March 1895), p.2.

⁸² Anon., 'Bristol South Habitation', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (11 July 1891), p.8.

⁸³ Anon., 'Habitation Notes', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (27 December 1890), p.16; Anon., 'District Intelligence', in *South Wales Daily News*, (14 February 1893), p.7.

⁸⁴ Anon., 'The Chairman at the Grand Council at Cardiff', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (3 December 1887), p.10; Anon., 'Primrose League Demonstration at Penarth', in *The Western Mail*, (13 November 1889), p.3;

⁸⁵ Anon., 'Conservative Organisation', in *The Western Mail*, (26 April 1889), p.3

⁸⁶ Anon., 'Annual Dinner of the Cardiff Primrose League', in *The Western Mail*, (4 May 1886), p.4

⁸⁷ Anon., 'Conservative Organisation', in *The Western Mail*, (26 April 1889), p.3

the Ladies’ Grand Council to help form a women-only Habitation.⁸⁸ Founding Dames came from both Cardiff and South Glamorganshire.⁸⁹ The first annual report credits numerous women for taking over the running of Roath, Canton and the Docks Habitations;⁹⁰ the increase in activism can clearly be seen in Figure 1, by the quantity of awards granted to both male and female activists from 1892 onwards.

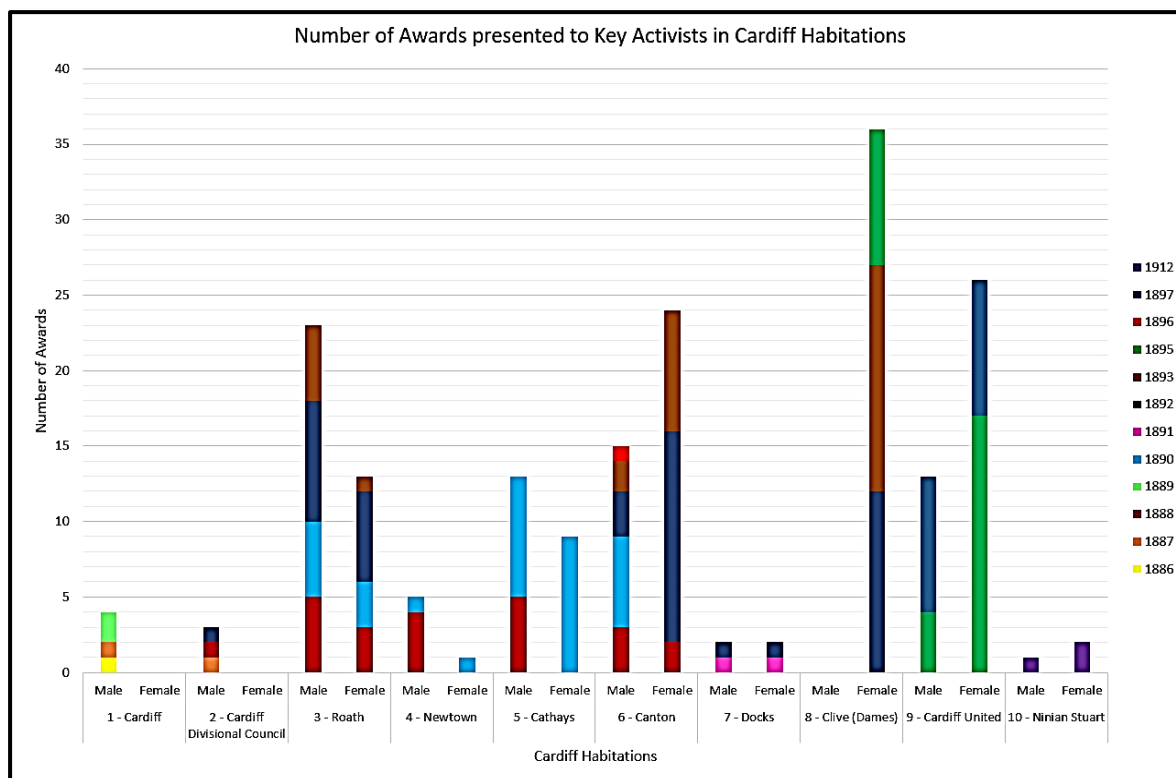


Figure 1: Number of Primrose League Awards Presented to Key Activists in Cardiff Habitations⁹¹

In late 1893, as Conservatives prepared for the next election, the Grand Council had decided on drastic action with regards to Cardiff’s Habitations.⁹² After negotiations with local gentry,⁹³ the warrants of all Cardiff Habitations were revoked in January 1895, and a

⁸⁸ Anon., ‘Proposed Formation of a Dames Habitation’, in *The Western Mail*, (22 November 1889), p.3

⁸⁹ Anon., ‘Cardiff’, in *Weekly Mail*, (8 February 1890), p.15.

⁹⁰ Anon., ‘First Annual Report’, in *Primrose League Gazette*, (26 September 1891), p.3.

⁹¹ Collated from issues of *Primrose League Gazette*, *Weekly Mail*, *The Western Mail*, *Evening Express*, *South Wales Daily News* and *The Cardiff Times* between 1886 and 1912.

⁹² Anon., ‘Dissatisfied with Wales’, in *South Wales Daily News*, (15 December 1893), p.7.

⁹³ Anon., ‘The Primrose League in Cardiff’, in *The Western Mail*, (15 December 1894), p.4.

new Habitation created, prompting angry responses from Habitation officers who claimed not to have been consulted.⁹⁴ Dedicated activists were rewarded, although in some cases these awards had been applied for via their previous Habitations.⁹⁵ Whilst the Grand Council and Habitation founders claimed the successful 1895 General Election result proved the validity of their decision,⁹⁶ women activists found other sources of activism to pursue.⁹⁷ By September 1897, only five key women activists previously associated with the Clive (Dames) habitation were still receiving awards.⁹⁸

Between 1885 and 1895, Conservative activists in Cardiff had the opportunity to consolidate voter opposition to the dominant Liberal hegemony on issues such as Disestablishment, Home Rule, education, and Sunday Closing legislation. The Primrose League provided a cross-class cultural model based on the 'maintenance of Religion, the Estates of the Realm and the Empire',⁹⁹ which aligned with the interests of many Cardiff voters.¹⁰⁰ It also provided the opportunity for Welsh Conservative women to get involved in local political activism, yet Cardiff's activists avoided the success of the Habitations in Wyndham, Ely and Penarth, despite the best efforts of key women activists associated with the Clive (Dames) Habitation. Factors involved in Cardiff's poor performance included the egos of local Conservative officers, which hampered co-operation, and caused committees to represent factions rather than 'the great body of Conservative electors'.¹⁰¹ Cardiff's civic identity, which influenced both her built environment and the attitude towards Cardiff women's civic engagement, also contributed to the decline of activism associated with the Primrose League during this period by influencing the lack of publicity given to the work done by Conservative women activists. Cardiff's attitude towards its citizens' Anglo-Welsh

⁹⁴ F. H. Edwards, 'The Formation of One Large Habitation', in *The Western Mail*, (24 January 1895), p.7; Anon., 'To the Editor of the Western Mail', in *The Western Mail*, (24 January 1895), p.7.

⁹⁵ Anon., 'Promotions', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (1 February 1895), pp.2-3.

⁹⁶ Anon., 'Reconstruction of the Primrose League in Cardiff', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (1 February 1895), pp.5-6; Anon., 'Cardiff Conservatism', in *Evening Express*, (1 February 1895), p.4.

⁹⁷ Anon., 'Women on Local Governing Bodies', in *South Wales Echo*, (6 October 1894), p.4; Anon., 'Juvenile Conservatives', in *Weekly Mail*, (11 September 1897), p.12.

⁹⁸ Anon., 'Primrose League Picnic', in *Weekly Mail*, (11 September 1897), p.2

⁹⁹ Anon., 'The Literature of the Primrose League', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (15 October 1887), p.4.

¹⁰⁰ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City'; Anon., 'Enlist the Support of Liberal Imperialists', in *Evening Express* (30 August 1900), p.4. See also Table 1 for the narrow voting margins in General Elections during this time.

¹⁰¹ Anon., 'Conservative Organisation', in *The Western Mail*, (26 April 1889), p.3

moral femininity seems to have severely impeded news reporting relating to their activism.¹⁰² However, without access to the Primrose League Habitation records, it is difficult to determine to what extent Conservative women activists were involved, the detailed demographics of the activists, or how much their contribution was ignored.

¹⁰² Anon., 'Ladies and Liberalism', in *The Western Mail*, (14 March 1895), p.4.

Chapter 4: 'As successful as the Primrose League' – Conservative women's political activity in Cardiff 1895-1914

The decline in Primrose League activism discussed in Chapter 3 coincided with further democratic reform; the *Local Government Act 1894* limited Poor Law Guardian elections to urban areas, abolished property qualifications and enfranchised women as Guardians. In Cardiff, middle-class Primrose League women activists, both Conservative and Liberal Unionist, joined forces with non-Radical Liberals in October 1894 to create the non-partisan Cardiff Society for Promoting the Election of Women to Local Governing Bodies.¹⁰³ Campaigning was brisk, due to the election date of 15 December 1894, and benefited from those with experience of canvassing and organising public meetings, whether members of the Primrose League or the Cardiff Women's Liberal Association.¹⁰⁴ The Society supported six non-partisan candidates, although Florence Colclough Watson was immediately identifiable to many in Cardiff as the lady visitor sister of Jonas Watson, Conservative and Primrose League activist.¹⁰⁵ Two other candidates, Miss Mabel Thomas and Mrs Harriet Thompson, were also part of the parochial Primrose League network, the former as a Conservative lady visitor, the latter as part of a Liberal Unionist family that, alongside other Primrose League women activists, provided Christmas meals to the poor.¹⁰⁶ A total of 12 women stood for election, prompting complaints from Liberal Radicals that the Cardiff Society for Promoting the Election of Women to Local Governing Bodies was consorting with the enemy in the form of Conservative activists and candidates.¹⁰⁷ Mrs Thompson, Miss Thomas and Miss Watson were nonetheless elected for a three year term as Poor Law Guardians, and Primrose League activists needed to find another outlet for their political activism.

¹⁰³ Anon. 'Women on Local Governing Bodies', in *South Wales Echo*, (6 October 1894), p.4

¹⁰⁴ Masson, 'For Women, For Wales, and for Liberalism'.

¹⁰⁵ Anon., 'Ladies as Guardians', in *South Wales Daily News*, (27 November 1894), p.6.

¹⁰⁶ Masson, 'For Women, For Wales, and for Liberalism', p.188.

¹⁰⁷ Anon., 'Lady Guardians for Cardiff', in *The Western Mail*, (21 November 1894), p.3; Anon., 'Election of Guardians', in *Evening Express*, (19 December 1894), p.4;

Throughout the growth and decline of Primrose League activism in Cardiff between 1885 and 1895, news articles focused on the middle and upper classes; it was extremely rare for working class women to be named, unless they had been presented with an award.¹⁰⁸ Opportunities for working class activism were limited by household income, job and gender; working class women activists in the Cardiff Primrose League would resign when their activism impacted their working life.¹⁰⁹ Despite these factors, many working class Conservative women activists stayed loyal to the Primrose League in Cardiff after the creation of the Cardiff United Habitation in 1895. Their own parochial networks were built around their local ward branch as well as through their husbands' jobs and the area they lived in. Appendix A shows a map of identified activists' addresses for those members of the Primrose League associated with Cardiff Habitations between 1885 and 1912, whilst Table 3 shows the demographic breakdown for 235 identified Cardiff activist households.

Other activists and their families may have transferred their allegiance to the Cardiff Conservative Working Men's Club which, from 1894 onwards, took on the organisation of mass 'political education' and 'social entertainment' meetings on a scale that rivalled the Primrose League at its most effective. Again, reports of political meetings refer to segregation of women in balcony areas, presumably the majority were working class rather than the predominantly middle-class audience of earlier Primrose League demonstrations.¹¹⁰ By 1898, the Cardiff Conservative Working Men's Club had 2,000 members and could organise mass family picnics for 500 wives and children.¹¹¹ Jenkins argues that class-based models of womanhood supported a 'contest for power' within Cardiff society,¹¹² and that provision for women to engage publicly in civic socio-political participation was used by various factions to define the role of women during the period under discussion.¹¹³ The assumption of the Primrose League organisational and recruitment

¹⁰⁸ Anon., 'Cardiff Primrose League Ball', in *Evening Express*, (24 April 1901), p.2.

¹⁰⁹ Anon., 'Habitation Notes', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (1 November 1897), p.13; Anon., 'Cardiff Primrose League Ball', in *Evening Express*, (24 April 1901), p.2.

¹¹⁰ Anon., 'The Mass Meeting', in *The Western Mail*, (25 January 1895)

¹¹¹ Anon., 'Juvenile Conservatives', in *Weekly Mail*, (11 September 1897), p.12; Anon., 'Cardiff Conservatives', in *Evening Express*, (18 January 1898), p.3.

¹¹² Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports', p.907.

¹¹³ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Channel Ports', pp.908-912.

processes by the Cardiff Conservative Working Men's Club, and its commensurate increase in membership, suggests that Cardiff's working class was effecting a form of social mobility by mirroring the middle-class provisions for its definition of feminine space.

| Cardiff Suburb | Artisan/Working | Middle | Total |
|--------------------|-----------------|------------|------------|
| Butetown | 6 | 12 | 18 |
| Canton | 14 | 30 | 44 |
| Cathays | 13 | 39 | 52 |
| Central Ward | 1 | 19 | 20 |
| Crockherbtown | | 16 | 16 |
| Grangetown | 6 | | 6 |
| Newtown | 4 | | 4 |
| Riverside | 7 | 13 | 20 |
| Roath | 7 | 39 | 46 |
| Splottlands | 2 | | 2 |
| Temperance Town | | 1 | 1 |
| Tredegarville | 1 | 5 | 6 |
| Grand Total | 61 | 174 | 235 |

Table 3: Number of Cardiff Conservative activist households per suburb¹¹⁴

By contrast, middle-class women transferring their allegiance away from the Primrose League in Cardiff could either join another Habitation outside the municipal boundary, such as Upper Ely or West Wyndham,¹¹⁵ or increase their philanthropic work instead.¹¹⁶ Some, such as Mabel Hill, daughter of Sir Edward Hill, MP for Bristol South, and secretary of the Cardiff and District Association of University Women,¹¹⁷ involved themselves in promoting Welsh craftsmanship via the Welsh Industries Association. Others added support for refugees and earthquake victims to their philanthropic arsenal.¹¹⁸ A warning in the *Primrose*

¹¹⁴ Collated from news reports in *Evening Express*, *Weekly Mail*, *The Western Mail*, *The Cardiff Times*, and *Primrose League Gazettes* from 1887 to 1904. Cross-checked against trade directories and the census enumerator books for 1881-1911.

¹¹⁵ Anon., 'Enlist the Support of Liberal Imperialists', in *Evening Express* (30 August 1900), p.4.

¹¹⁶ Anon., 'Welsh National Bazaar to Aid an Important Charity', in *Evening Express*, (29 April 1896), p.2.

¹¹⁷ Anon., 'Women's Lodging Houses', in *Evening Express*, (27 October 1910), p.3.

¹¹⁸ Anon., 'Lady Hill's Appeal', in *Evening Express* (21 January 1909), p.2; 'A Plea for the Transvaal Refugees', in *Evening Express*, (27 November 1899).

League Gazette,¹¹⁹ that Habitations should avoid taking sides on the question of Tariff Reform, may have prompted the migration in 1904 from near-dormant Habitations in Cardiff and South Glamorganshire to a newly-formed branch of the Women's Association of the Tariff Reform League.¹²⁰ Within a year, the South Glamorgan Conservative Association noted that the MP for South Glamorgan, Colonel Wyndham-Quin, was attending Tariff Reform League meetings as well as those of the Primrose League.¹²¹ The Tariff Reform League promoted a protectionist policy championed by Joseph Chamberlain (1836-1914) that had the potential to transform the British Empire into a single trading bloc and campaigned for Parliamentary candidates that supported its goals.¹²² The Conservatives suffered a major defeat in the 1906 General Election when voters preferred the Liberal free trade policies, but the South Glamorgan Branch of the Women's Tariff Reform League regrouped and in 1909 Lady Dunraven, former founder Dame of the Cardiff United Habitation,¹²³ held a meeting of the Branch where she insisted that members should continue their activism until the Tariff Reform movement had a membership that matched South Glamorgan's total Primrose League membership of 1,800.¹²⁴ By 1911, there was little further reporting of Tariff Reform activity.

The Cardiff United Habitation appears to have ceased generating reports via either local newspapers or the Primrose League Gazette in 1903, leaving Cardiff without a Primrose League presence until the adoption of Lord Ninian Stuart as the Conservative candidate in 1908 caused the local Conservative organisation to focus on proven electoral activism. Only two previously identified members of any of the original Cardiff Habitations seem to have transferred over to the new Ninian Stuart Habitation;¹²⁵ this cannot be confirmed without checking news reports with the Habitation records. The limited news sources available for this Habitation suggest that the main focus of its members was on the

¹¹⁹ Anon., 'Women and Leagues', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (1 March 1904), pp.8-9.

¹²⁰ Anon., 'Tariff Reform League', in *Evening Express*, (19 August 1904), p.2.

¹²¹ Anon., 'South Glamorgan Conservative Association', in *Barry Dock News*, (19 May 1905), p.4.

¹²² Smith, *The Taming of Democracy*.

¹²³ Anon., 'Primrose League', in *The Western Mail*, (31 January 1895), p.6.

¹²⁴ Anon., 'Lady Dunraven at Home', in *The Glamorgan Gazette*, (3 September 1909), p.5.

¹²⁵ Anon., 'Primrose League at Cardiff', in *The Cardiff Times*, (21 March 1908), p.5.

social activities,¹²⁶ although Miss M. E. Phillips established a juvenile Primrose League branch of the Habitation between 1911 and 1912 that claimed to have 425 members.¹²⁷ The Ninian Stuart Habitation continued into the 1920s, despite the wartime death of Lord Ninian in 1915.

Finally, the Conservative women activists who supported female suffrage had little official support from the Primrose League, which maintained suffrage was 'a matter of opinion and not of principle'¹²⁸ and argued that it had provided women activists with 'a distinct position in the political arena'.¹²⁹ For Cardiff and South Glamorgan women activists, that 'distinct position' was subordinate to the influence they could wield via philanthropic work. By 1908, Conservative women activists had joined with Liberal Unionists and other Liberals to form a branch of the National Union of Women's Suffrage Society. The Cardiff and District Women's Suffrage Society was non-partisan and 70 members elected a Primrose League Dame, Mrs Rose Lewis, as President, with a Liberal Unionist as Vice-President and another member of the Primrose League as an Executive Councillor.¹³⁰ Within two months, Mrs Rose Lewis, a member of the local landed gentry, had firmly established the Society within her parochial network as a non-militant, non-partisan alternative to the 'aggressive... proud Socialist' suffragettes that had previously disrupted Cardiff Women's Liberal Association meetings.¹³¹ Garden parties in support of Women's Suffrage resembled Primrose League meetings, with entertainment following political speeches.¹³² Within a year the Society had 240 members and 'a salaried organiser'.¹³³ By 1912, The Cardiff Society had eight district societies, and Mrs Rose Lewis was the president of the South Wales and Monmouthshire Federation of Women's Suffrage Societies. When the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies dropped its non-partisan stance and entered into an electoral

¹²⁶ Anon., 'An Enjoyable Evening', in *Evening Express*, (22 April 1909), p.2.

¹²⁷ Anon., 'Primrose League', in *The Western Mail*, (20 April 1912), p.5.

¹²⁸ Anon., 'Women's Suffrage', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (1 November 1895), p.4.

¹²⁹ Anon., 'Woman's Suffrage', in *Primrose League Gazette*, (15 December 1888), p.7.

¹³⁰ Anon., 'Women's Suffrage', in *Evening Express*, (3 July 1908), p.3.

¹³¹ Anon., 'Cardiff Suffragettes', in *The Cardiff Times* (10 November 1906), p.9; Anon. 'Woman's Suffrage', in *Evening Express*, (18 September 1908).

¹³² Anon., 'Suffragettes at Greenmeadow', in *Evening Express*, (3 July 1909), p.2.

¹³³ Anon., 'Women's Suffrage', in *The Cardiff Times* (7 August 1909), p.5.

pact with the Labour Party in 1912, it was Mrs Lewis who drove the determined opposition to the new policy.¹³⁴

It follows that the net result of the Grand Council's decision to amalgamate the various Cardiff Habitations in 1895 was to fragment a burgeoning parochial network that encompassed women of all classes. Denied a voice in an organisation that purported to provide an opportunity for political engagement that accorded with both Welsh and British concepts of feminine influence, each activist chose the alternate that was appropriate for her. It can be argued that, rather than the Primrose League providing the model for cross-class cultural commonality between Cardiff's Conservative activists, it was the middle-class female experience of non-partisan collaboration that shaped the behaviour that came to be defined as the unifying bedrock of the Primrose League.

¹³⁴ Ursula Masson, 'Divided Loyalties: Women's Suffrage and Party Politics in South Wales, 1912-1915', p.114-118.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to produce a detailed analysis of the intersection between political activism and its effects on the identities of Conservative women in the Cardiff and Glamorgan constituencies between 1885 and 1914, with a specific focus on understanding the nuances of their active political involvement with the Cardiff Primrose League Habitations during this period. Having identified that the relationships between the Conservative organisations and the Primrose League Habitations in Cardiff were key to understanding the range of gendered activism available to Conservative women in the Cardiff and Glamorgan constituencies, original research was conducted using news sources, Primrose League ephemera, census enumerator books and trade directories in order to place these relationships into their demographic and socio-economic context.

Analysis of Cardiff's civic identity was performed, supported by primary sources including news articles and council minutes, to determine the origin and evolution of Cardiff citizens' civic pride. This dissertation determined that, as with other British commercial and industrial towns that underwent rapid growth in the nineteenth century, Cardiff's civic pride was the expression of a prosperous and diverse urban middle-class identity, whereby the construction of high-quality buildings evocative of a Classic past supported the negotiations for prestige civic institutions, which in turn established Cardiff's dominance in public affairs and provided opportunities for philanthropic networks.

It was established that the rapid growth experienced by Cardiff during the nineteenth century, fuelled by its development from a small market town of 1,871 inhabitants into a globally-focused commercial port,¹³⁵ provided the impetus for its substantial and diverse middle class to shape Cardiff's built environment in accordance with their imagined

¹³⁵ C. Roy Lewis, 'A stage in the Development of the Industrial Town: A Case Study of Cardiff, 1845-75', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, vol.4(2) (1979), pp.129-152.

community of a global Anglo-Welsh cosmopolitan hub.¹³⁶ Cardiff's civic identity was thus shaped by both its English-speaking population and its status as a key Welsh commercial centre and port. Cardiff's municipal corporation crafted a civic persona based on a Classic Roman or Greek image of a feminine ideal to highlight the town's superiority over its neighbours. This civic persona became embedded in the psyche of Cardiff's citizens via, *inter alia*, newspaper illustrations, and shaped their perception of a complex, hybrid Anglo-Welsh femininity. Cardiff thus projected a civic image that used gendered representations to emphasise a civilised and moral civic identity which mirrored contemporary Welsh and English concepts of femininity.

Having determined the parameters of civic pride and civic identity, this dissertation examined the existing historiography surrounding the concepts of national and civic identity. It established that the historiography focuses on the Liberal Nonconformist hegemony of the late nineteenth century, and the Labour activism of the early twentieth century, effectively ignoring the experiences of Conservatives. Through further analysis, it was established that the Conservative vote in Cardiff during the period under discussion varied between 43.1% and 52.6%, considerably more than the existing historiography on Cardiff's citizens would suggest. The dissertation noted that both Cragoe and Morgan concurred that the Welsh identity of the period under investigation incorporated 'imperial patriotism',¹³⁷ suggesting that a sizeable proportion of Cardiff's population would be comfortable with the Primrose League emphasis on religion, constitution and empire.

This dissertation considered the rapid uptake of the Primrose League concept by Cardiff Conservatives between 1885 and 1887, comparing the plethora of Cardiff Habitations with the neighbouring South Glamorgan constituency. It identified the paucity of female activists in the early years and suggested that Liberal and Radical media-based attacks might have contributed a deterrent factor. This dissertation acknowledged that large attendances at mass meetings or social events did not indicate a large activist base, despite

¹³⁶ Lewis. 'A Case Study of Cardiff'; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London, 2016[1983]).

¹³⁷ Evans, 'The Welsh Victorian City'.

claims to the contrary by Habitation officers, but could be used to indicate that Conservative voters and Conservative women were increasingly comfortable with their affiliation being public knowledge. Further analysis was undertaken to support the contention that Cardiff's Welsh Conservative women were unable to contribute fully in the way that their South Glamorgan counterparts did, until a women-only Habitation was founded in 1890. Contributory factors were identified, including the inability of male activists to collaborate with their Conservative counterparts and the prevailing perception of Cardiff women's sphere of influence and activism which led to a lack of reporting of female activism.

This dissertation then undertook an analysis of the effect of Conservative women's political activism within the societal constraints imposed by Cardiff as it evolved from town to city and developed its own unique hybrid identity. It demonstrated that the Primrose League Habitations in Cardiff had a predominantly middle-class demographic and that, whilst the working-class activists tended to stay loyal to the parochial networks they formed at the juxtaposition of home, work and branch activism, the middle-class activists changed their focus to other forms of parochial sphere activity when necessary. Whilst the local gentry were involved in founding of Cardiff Habitations, they were rarely reported as involved in the mundane electoral processes. Cardiff's middle-class Conservative women chose to continue their involvement in socio-political matters outside the Primrose League through single-issue campaigns such as local government representation, tariff reform and women's suffrage, whilst maintaining their philanthropic parochial networks.

In summation, this dissertation argues that the parochial networks of middle-class female activists were instrumental in promoting a model of activism focused on cultural commonalities that transcended class boundaries. The analysis shows that this activism model was already in use within middle-class philanthropic parochial networks, which were effectively non-partisan in outlook. This cultural model, which provided a transferable template for ongoing non-partisan activism, was most effective when honed within these philanthropic networks. This dissertation further argued that it was the experience of Welsh Conservative middle-class activists in the administration and fund-raising elements of

philanthropic work that made these women so powerful when given the opportunity to operate within a women-only Habitation. The analysis further demonstrates that the decline of the Primrose League within Cardiff was rooted in the male activists' interpretation of their own roles relative to local Conservative activists, as well as male activists' interpretation of the requirements of female activism. These interpretations were shaped by both Cardiff's allegorical Classical feminine persona, and by Cardiff's built environment, which reinforced female socio-political participation as 'visible, yet separate'.¹³⁸

Finally, the dissertation examined the historiography of civic and national identity, alongside that of gendered activism during the period under investigation. It identified the effective silencing of Conservative women activists' voices due to a focus on the Liberal Nonconformist hegemony, and used analysis of newspapers, trade directories, census enumerator books and maps to support an alternate perspective. Conservative women in Cardiff shaped their own multifaceted identities through interaction with the parochial networks surrounding their activism. The non-partisan, cross-class cultural model adopted by those active within Cardiff's Primrose League Habitations formed the basis for interacting with other forms of activism, allowing these women to maintain their intersecting national and civic identities in accordance with Welsh societal norms, and they were prepared to use their considerable power to maintain the non-partisan status of the organisations they aligned with.

¹³⁸ Jenkins, 'Queen of the Bristol Ports'.

Appendix A: Map of Cardiff and District Showing Activist Locations

****IMAGE REMOVED FOR COPYRIGHT REASONS****

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