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**'GENEROUS AND LOFTY SYMPATHIES':
THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY, THE 1866
WOMEN'S SUFFRAGE PETITION AND THE
DEVELOPMENT OF MID-VICTORIAN
FEMINISM.**

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Abstract

The women's suffrage petition presented to the House of Commons in June 1866 is credited with being the first move in the British campaign. Yet although given a pivotal position in the women's movement, it and its organisation have received scant attention. This thesis examines the origins of this petition, which was organised by members of the Kensington Society (1865-1868). It investigates the members of this society, and those 1,499 women who signed the petition.

This thesis looks in detail at these women both statistically and, in so far as it is ever possible, in terms of the 'experience' of the individuals involved. The thesis uses information from census, directories, etc. as well as biographical resources, in a variety of ways, ranging from 'life histories' of sample rank and file individuals, to statistical data covering several hundred women, and including charts which explore the activities of individual women over time, and case studies of groups of up to fifty women.

Following the Introductory chapter, Chapter Two presents the context for change within which the Kensington Society and the petition came into being. Chapter Three introduces some rank and file women, and looks at the role of older women. Chapter Four considers the Kensington Society, and the part its members played in collecting the signatures for the petition in 1866 and looks at the age, marital status, class and geographical distribution of both Kensington Society members and those women who signed this petition. Chapter Five explores shared experience, and Chapter Six shared commitment. Chapter Seven considers the implications of this investigation for the history of the early campaigns for women's suffrage in Britain.

Contents.

List of charts, tables and illustrations.	2
Acknowledgements	4
List of Abbreviations	5
Chapter One. INTRODUCTION	6
1. Origins of the study and questions raised.	
2. The Kensington Society, the Petition and its women.	
3. The Literature and the questions raised by it.	
4. Methodology.	
Chapter Two. THE CONTEXT FOR CHANGE, 1840-1865.	48
1. Technological and social change.	
2. Women's involvement in campaigns.	
Chapter Three. THE WOMEN.	69
1. The Ellis sisters, Hannah Pipe and Mary Crudelius.	
2. The role of older women.	
Chapter Four. THE KENSINGTON SOCIETY AND THE SUFFRAGE PETITION.	90
1. The Membership of the Kensington Society.	
2. The Suffrage Petition.	
3. The Petition data. Age, marital status, family background and occupation.	
4. The Petition data. Geography and social networks.	
Chapter Five. SHARED EXPERIENCE.	142
1. Individuals and their life experiences.	
2. Respectable, orderly and independent: female heads of household who signed the petition.	
Chapter Six. SHARED COMMITMENT.	180
1. Shared commitment before 1866	
2. Shared commitment after 1866	
3. Shared commitment of the most active campaigners.	
4. Kensington Society members' commitments.	
Chapter Seven. CONCLUSION.	206
Appendix 1. The Sample.	220
Appendix 2. Heads of Household Sample.	221
Bibliography.	224

Charts, tables, and illustrations

Plate 1.	'A Gentleman of influence.'	8
Plate 2	'Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Emily Davies 'present' petition.	16
Plate 3	Eliza Ellis and her museum	73
Plate 4	Kensington Society Rules	92
Chart 4a.	Age of 43 Kensington Society members in 1866.	103
Chart 4b	Age of 226 women who signed the Suffrage Petition in 1866.	105
Chart 4c.	Marital status according to the 1861 Census.	106
Chart 4d	Marital status of Kensington Society members in 1865.	107
Chart 4e	Marital status of Kensington Society members who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition.	107
Chart 4f.	Marital status of women for which this information is available 1866 Suffrage petition.	108
Chart 4g.	Marital status of women who subscribed to the Enfranchisement of Women Committee October 1866-July 1867.	109
Chart 4h	Family background of forty-three Kensington Society members	112
Chart 4i.	Occupations of thirty-seven Kensington Society members who worked at some period of their life.	115
Chart 4j.	Family background of 265 women who signed the Suffrage Petition	117
Chart 4k	Occupational class of women who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition.	119
Chart 4l	Family background of forty-three Kensington Society members and 265 Suffrage Petition women.	121
Chart 4m	Occupational class of Subscribers to the Enfranchisement of Women Committee October 1866-July 1867.	122
Chart 4n.	The Bright Connection.	137
Chart 4o.	The Garrett Connection.	139
Chart 5a	Place of work in the lives of 218 women who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition	162
Chart 5b.	Marital status of Heads of Household sample.	169
Chart 5c	Occupational class /Family background of Heads of Household sample.	172
Chart 5d	Place of work in the lives of forty-eight women in the Heads of Household sample.	175
Chart 6a	Evidence of other campaigning commitments among the 1499 women who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition.	183

Chart 6b	Shared commitments to organisations before 1866 among women who signed the Suffrage Petition and their immediate families.	184
Chart 6c	Shared commitments to organisations after 1866 among women who signed the Suffrage Petition and their immediate families.	187
Table 6d	The levels of commitment to specific causes of women with multiple commitment active before 1866.	193
Table 6e.	The levels of commitment to specific causes of women with multiple commitment. Activities commencing with the 1866 Suffrage Petition.	197
Chart 6f	Occupations and commitments of Kensington Society Members.	200
Chart 6g	Number of commitments of Kensington Society members who signed the Suffrage Petition.	204
Chart 6h	Number of commitments of Kensington Society members who did not sign the Suffrage Petition.	205
Appendix 2	Table of Female Heads of Household.	221

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Ann Dingsdale, December 1995.

Abbreviations.

BWLA	British Women's Liberal Association.
ELEA	Edinburgh Ladies' Education Association
EWJ	<u>English Woman's Journal</u>
GPDSC	Girls' Public Day School Company.
KS	Kensington Society
LAS	London Association of Schoolmistresses
LNA	Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts.
MWP	Married Women's Property Committees.
NAPSS	National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.
NSWS	National Society for Women's Suffrage.
SFA	Society of Female Artists.
SPEW	Society for Promoting the Employment of Women.
SWS	Society for Women's Suffrage
ULE	University Local Examinations Memorial.
WWC	Working Women's College

Chapter One. Introduction.

1. Origins of the study and the questions raised.

On 7th June 1866 a petition¹ was presented by Emily Davies² and Elizabeth Garrett³ to John Stuart Mill in the lobby of the House of Commons. It demanded that suffrage should be extended to women householders. The Reform Bill was currently being debated as part of the lobbying taking place in preparation for the promised Electoral Reform Bill which had been under discussion for the past decade. This petition was unusual, in respect of its size, provenance and demands.⁴ The number of signatures was small; only 1,499. The Member to whom it was presented, John Stuart Mill, was most respected as a philosopher and economist, rather than as a politician, and had only been in the House of Commons for a year. The petition was delivered by two women, one a vicar's daughter, the other the daughter of a successful businessman. The petition was signed by women only. It humbly requested that the honourable

¹ Sarah Avery, Kate F. Ackland, Annie E. S. Acworth et al. To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.... No place of publication, No publisher, n.d. [Girton College, Blackburn Collection. Suffrage pamphlets.] The date of the petition is confirmed by internal evidence of signatures of women who died/were married etc., notably Louisa Smith, sister of Elizabeth Garrett, who died in early 1867. There are exactly 1,499 signatures, the number on record for this petition. The wording of the petition matches that which is quoted in Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon 'Reasons for the enfranchisement of women.' as that of the 1866 petition. [in Candida Ann Lacey ed. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group New York and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987]. Correspondence between Emily Davies and other supporters confirm that this petition was printed from the proof-read original petition before it was presented, in order that copies might be circulated to MPs and the press. Normally mss. petitions were destroyed after presentation to Parliament after being recorded by the Committee for Petitions. 'Petition for Extension of the Elective Franchise to All Householders without Distinction of Sex.' (Public Petition No. 8501, Presented 7th June, 1866) Reports of Select Committee on Public Petitions, 1866, p. 697, and Appendix, p. 305. This gives 1,521 signatures. The reason for this discrepancy in figures is possibly that several women signed twice by accident. The printed version was arranged in alphabetical order, and that, and the careful proof reading recorded, produced the accurate figure.

² Miss Emily Davies (1830-1921) Editor of English Woman's Journal, Secretary of the Kensington Society. Presented 1866 Suffrage petition. Educational campaigner. London School Board member and founder of Girton College, Cambridge.

³ Miss Elizabeth Garrett, later Mrs Anderson. (1836-1913) Presented 1866 Suffrage Petition. Doctor. London School Board member. Mayor of Aldeburgh, Suffolk.

⁴ Petitions came to the House of Commons like confetti. According to the report in The Times (Friday June 8th, 1866, No. 25,519, p. 5.) this petition was one of twenty eight, on a range of subjects, presented to the House the previous day. At the beginning of the century, petitions had been discussed by the House when they were presented, but this took up so much time, that the practice was abandoned. They were acknowledged to allow the expression of public opinion, so they had to be presented by an MP, who by this act publicly pledged his support for the views expressed in the petition. They were then recorded by the Select Committee. At least one previous petition for women's suffrage had been presented in 1832, and one had been organised by Anne Knight in Sheffield. See Peter Fraser. 'Public petitioning and Parliament before 1832.' Vol. XLVI, No 158, Oct. 1961. History, and Colin Leys 'Petitioning in the Nineteenth Century and the Twentieth Century.' Political Studies. Vol. 3, February 1955, pp. 45-54.

House should '...consider the expediency of providing for the representation of all householders, without distinction of sex, who possess such property or rental qualification as your honourable House may determine.'⁵ This privilege had specifically been denied to women by the 1832 Reform Act. Various attempts at electoral reform had been discussed in the intervening years, aimed at including a portion of those men who had become politically active, and whose demands were becoming more threatening. The enormous petitions and demonstrations associated with Chartism had abated, but the points of the Charter had found their way into mainstream political discussion.

An acceptable alternative to universal manhood suffrage might be the enlargement of the electorate to include the head of most households. Debate centred upon the level to which this principle might be extended which would satisfy 'respectable' demands for representation without threatening rule by uneducated masses. Women were excluded from this issue, since they were expected to be included within households led by men, be they fathers, brothers, husbands, sons or guardians. As wives, the position of women was least problematic, since their property belonged to their husbands. Parliamentary elections were exclusively male occasions, involving public voting, treating with alcohol and the recording of votes in print. Canvassing in the 1865 election for John Stuart Mill by Barbara Bodichon and her friends had been sufficiently surprising to prompt a Punch cartoon. [see Plate 1] But the vote gave some influence over legislation and the use of the fruits of taxation. The responsibility which having the vote implied offered status in the business world, and was an asset when dealing with social superiors who might require support at election times.

There were theoretical and practical reasons why some women might want the vote in 1866. The idea of equality of the sexes had currency in some circles, and had been discussed since the late eighteenth century. The campaigns against slavery had enabled women, and some men to draw parallels between the situation of slaves and women. Practically, the vote was of importance for two main reasons. Firstly, there was little opportunity for women to influence legislation and social change which affected them without access to Parliament. Issues such as the property of married women, divorce law, the custody of children were decided by a male Parliament with a male electorate. Secondly, those women who did not have the 'protection' of father, husband or son encountered serious problems in securing a home or earning a living, which the power of the vote could alleviate. It could be difficult to obtain a tenancy,

⁵Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon 'Reasons for the enfranchisement of women.' in Candid Ann Lacey ed. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group. New York and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987. pp. 104-111.



Plate 1. 'A Gentleman of influence' and 'Politesse in politics.' Punch 22nd July 1865.

and some, for example the widows of farmers, could face eviction if they were unable to offer their landlord a vote.

The 1851 Census had highlighted the imbalance between the sexes which meant that there were many women who would never marry.⁶ Less attention was paid to the plight of widows, but they were more likely than the single women to become lone heads of household, paying taxes and rates, yet not represented in either local or national government. Both women who presented the petition to John Stuart Mill had experienced the disadvantages of not having the vote. So had many of their friends and acquaintances who supported this demand. Emily Davies lived with her widowed mother. Her father had chosen to educate his sons, but not his daughter, to her great frustration. In 1864 she had successfully campaigned and negotiated with the men who organised the Cambridge University Local Examinations to allow girls to take their examinations. Elizabeth Garrett was also a householder, sharing her home with a school friend (though her father supported her financially). At this time she was engaged in the struggle to obtain a medical education, combating exclusively male professional bodies.

Both women, like some of their fellow petitioners, had also begun to become confident and competent within the world of men, through the negotiations to achieve medical education and access to qualifications. They had lived through two or three decades when women had achieved some modest contributory influence over events, for example through the women's Anti-Slavery societies, with their specific strategies, such as sugar boycotts. The influential National Association for the Promotion of Social Science [NAPSS] had been set up as a mixed organisation, and both women had joined in its debates, which were seen as influencing public policy. Only months earlier, Emily Davies, with seven of her friends who were school principals, had been invited to give evidence on the education of girls to the Taunton Commission. Both had some involvement with the Langham Place enterprises, involving all-women publishing, employment, and club facilities. Though small scale, these enterprises had attracted the (generally unsympathetic) attention of the national press, thus making a wider audience aware of their activities. These modest successes led to more ambitious attempts to gain equality.

The scale of difficulty of this ambition, and its symbolic importance, was strikingly described in 1868 by an obscure woman living on a farm in rural Kent, in a letter to Helen Taylor, John Stuart Mill's stepdaughter. Writing to apologise for not being able to collect many signatures for a later petition, she wrote:

⁶See Chapter Four, Table 4c for the position in 1861. There is a selection of contemporary expressions of views on this topic in Janet Horowitz Murray. Strong Minded Women, and other lost voices from Nineteenth Century England. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1982. pp. 48-61.

The men have the Bible at their tongues end from Genesis to Paul's epistles and the women are cowed and silent. I doubt if I ever knew a woman who dared do so much as sign a petition without the approbation of the men, husband or other, who determined the amount of cash she had in her purse and whose temper governed her. Whether women get enfranchisement or not, they need it.⁷

This thesis explores the identity of the women who signed this 1866 suffrage petition, (in its surviving, printed version), and the members of the Kensington Society which organised it. It considers them as individuals and in relation to each other. It looks at the methods by which they achieved changes in the status of women, their education and employment opportunities, and their early attempts to obtain the suffrage.

All the women named in the thesis either signed the suffrage petition, or were members of the Kensington Society, unless otherwise stated. The formation of the organised women's suffrage societies closely followed this petition. The petition has been seen by historians as the point at which the organised women's movement 'began'. Before that, Mary Wollstonecraft, Harriet Taylor Mill, Anne Knight, Lady Caroline Norton were solitary voices, crying in the wilderness. Once mixed committees of men and women ready to promote suffrage came into being, a 'real' campaign was under way.

In this thesis the data provided by the 1866 female suffrage petition has been used to explore the origins of this campaign, and those campaigns promoting the education and employment of women. It is argued that during the previous twenty years women had been at work co-operatively, using a variety of effective strategies in the move towards change. It is also suggested that this was a group of women linked by very complex connections of family, class, experience, propinquity, interest, and above all friendship and sympathy.

An interest in Barbara Bodichon⁸ provided the initial impetus for an investigation of this group, which her friend Bessie Rayner Parkes⁹ described in 1854, as 'An earnest and active group of people deeply interested in all that relates to female education and industry, and to reform of the laws affecting the property of married women'.¹⁰ Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Parkes and their circle of friends had a

⁷E.W.French to Helen Taylor March 28th 1868. London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers. vol. XIII, 198.

⁸Mrs Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-1891) Painter and feminist activist. Wrote A Brief summary in plain language of the most important laws concerning women 1854. Co-founder of the English Woman's Journal. Member of Kensington Society and instigator of debate about women's suffrage there. Supporter of Girton College.

⁹Miss Bessie Rayner Parkes, later Mrs Belloc (1828- 1884) Co-founder of English Woman's Journal. Gave papers at National Association for the Promotion of Social Science 1859, 1861.

¹⁰Bessie Rayner Parkes. 'Review of the last six years.' in English Woman's Journal February 1864..

profound impact on the education, employment and legal position of middle class British women in the years between 1850 and 1870. When first investigating Barbara Bodichon, the range of her interest in and support for the projects of her more 'single minded' friends was impressive. These friends included Emily Davies, Elizabeth Garrett, Jessie Boucherett,¹¹ Maria Rye,¹² and Emily Faithful.¹³ Barbara Bodichon herself was author of two early and influential papers on women's suffrage. The first was delivered in Autumn 1865 to the Kensington Society, a group of more than sixty intellectual middle class women, who met in a private house. The second was delivered to the annual Meeting of the NAPSS in October 1866.

Bodichon¹⁴ appeared to be unique in her creative versatility and formative influence. Writers on the women's suffrage campaign joined in dating its origins to the collection and presentation of a petition signed by 1,499 women to John Stuart Mill in June 1866. This was followed by the setting up of suffrage societies in Manchester, London, Bristol and Edinburgh. The credit for the petition was given to the Kensington Society. The society tended to be characterised by early feminist historians¹⁵ as a social gathering of wealthy thoughtful middle class women who met to debate women's issues in a drawing room setting. It appeared questionable that such a challenge to the status quo (which caused laughter in the House of Commons when the suggestion was made) could have emerged from the casual discussions of a group of 'ladies of leisure', however public spirited. To explain that this was simply a group of women gathered as a slightly more formal version of an 'at home' or literary club seemed quite inadequate.

Research for this thesis revealed a very different picture. There was an almost complete lack of single mindedness among this group of women. Indeed Barbara Bodichon appeared to be typical, not unique. Many others, like her, pursued reform, and, at the same time, demanded a fulfilling creative life for themselves. Many of her friends were also extremely versatile. At one and the same time they were involved in philanthropy, political debate, committee work and creative enterprises. They exploited the 'social round' which many middle class women found tedious and empty. Social occasions were used to gather information, make contacts, eavesdrop on powerful and influential men, and eventually convince those men of the necessity for

¹¹ Miss Emilia Jessie Boucherett (1825-1905) Founder of Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. Member of Kensington Society.

¹² Miss Maria Susan Rye (1829-1903) Female emigration Society and Langham Place [Did not sign 1866 Suffrage Petition]

¹³ Miss Emily Faithfull (1835-1895) Langham Place. Founded the all-women Victoria Press. [Did not sign 1866 suffrage petition.]

¹⁴ Sheila R. Herstein. A Mid Victorian Feminist, Barbara Bodichon. Yale, Yale University Press, 1985.

¹⁵ e.g. Ray Strachey. The Cause, A Short History of the Women's Movement in Britain. London, G.Bell and Son, 1928.

change. They moved from a committee meeting of a handful of women to the NAPSS meetings with a mixed well informed audience of hundreds. They moved daily from charitable school or prostitutes' refuge to dainty tea party or literary soiree. Though clearly aware of the contrasts between the worlds through which they passed, they did not appear to be disconcerted by them. Their self confidence was surprising, bearing in mind that they were all born before 1845. This was a period, surely, in which women of their class have been assumed to have been constrained by a pervasive ideal of domesticity?

It emerged that many members of the Kensington Society had shared experiences and campaigns, in some cases for more than twenty years. An example of similar links is that of the group of women who founded Bedford College. Mrs Reid, Miss Sturch and Miss Julia Smith and others had been discussing women's rights in private since the great Anglo-American Anti-Slavery convention in London in 1840. This debate was provoked in part by the exclusion of women from the conference hall. It was also because the Convention was an unique opportunity for women activists in anti-slavery to meet. English Female Anti-Slavery Societies had developed effective and innovative strategies, as Clare Midgley¹⁶ has shown. Their American counterparts were already drawing parallels between the treatment of slaves and women. The Seneca Falls Convention on women's rights took place in America in 1848. These transatlantic links were kept up after the London Convention.

This study is of 1,499 women, including thirty-five Kensington Society members, who signed the 1866 suffrage petition, and the additional thirty-four Kensington Society members who did not sign this petition. All but a handful of these women were resident in Britain, and of British nationality.* The contribution of women born in, or living in, Wales, Ireland and Scotland, to what was going on in England was vital. Although Scottish law was different, this did not prevent women in Edinburgh from setting up suffrage societies, linked with those in England. Bedford College, a pioneering educational institution, drew both teachers and pupils from Welsh locations, to which they subsequently returned. The annual Meetings of the NAPSS reflect the British emphasis of middle class reformers in the mid nineteenth century, as they were held in Ireland as well as mainland British cities at this period. It is actually very difficult to disentangle 'English' from 'Welsh', 'Scottish' and 'Irish' 'feminists' at this period, since academic, political and economic migrations of the middle classes, let alone the annual migrations for social and religious meetings etc.,

¹⁶Clare Midgley Women against slavery: the British campaigns, 1780-1870. London, Routledge, 1992.

* Appendix 1 gives a breakdown of the actual numbers of women and type of information upon which this thesis was based.

mixed and matched the middle classes in a variety of geographical locations, from the drawing room of an MP's wife in London to the steam room of a hydropathic spa in Yorkshire. Clearly some limits have to be drawn, and the net of connections spread beyond the Channel and the Atlantic. However the definition 'British' did have validity, and much interest, since it focused attention on the influence of people living far away from London on what was going on in the capital.¹⁷

Two significant institutions in this shared experience were Queen's College, London and Bedford College, both ostensibly set up to educate young middle class women whose changed circumstances made it necessary for them to earn a living by governessing. This simple aim had an obverse side: that middle class fathers, finding that they were paying good money to governesses whose educational standard was appalling, combined to provide these young women with a better standard of education. At once charitable and self interested, these colleges also offered the possibility of further education to well to do young women, (many the friends and relations of the founders and supporters.) By this means, young women like Barbara Leigh Smith came into contact with young women whose position and prospects were very different, and with whom they normally would not have mixed socially.

So-called 'redundant' women were a general concern in the years following the publication of the statistics based on the 1851 census. In response to this information pessimists painted a deeply disturbing picture of a large and growing group of middle class women who were the responsibility of neither fathers nor husbands. These were women in danger of losing their place in the structure of middle class society, for that position was defined by the status of male family members. They were also liable to lose moral as well as financial security. For young women like Bessie Parkes, Barbara Leigh Smith and others who had taken classes at the colleges, there was another, more personal dimension to this 'crisis'. Their classmates were now earning their own living as teachers and governesses. Their friends included women who would remain unmarried, and had little chance of finding work, should their fathers die without making adequate financial provision for them. They also knew successful school Principals, typical of whom were the entrepreneurial Frances Buss¹⁸ with her expanding North London Collegiate School, and the Headmistress of Cheltenham Ladies College, Dorothea Beale¹⁹. These were single women who were successful in

¹⁷Three American citizens working and living in Britain have been included. These were the actress Miss Charlotte Cushman, the anti-slavery activist Miss Sarah Parker Remond, and playwright and actress Mrs Maria Ann Lovell.

¹⁸Miss Frances Mary Buss (1827-1894) Founder and Headmistress, North London Collegiate School Kensington Society Member

¹⁹Miss Dorothea Beale (1831-1906) Headmistress Cheltenham Ladies College. Kensington Society Member. [Did not sign 1866 Suffrage Petition]

their work and self supporting. As young women, and in spite of comfortable circumstances, Barbara Leigh Smith and Bessie Parkes longed for the independence which earning money appeared to provide.²⁰ There were also successful groups of women, single or widowed, who were running businesses co-operatively in a social and economic environment which was hostile. The denial of the vote to these women contracted their opportunities to continue to support themselves.

The group of women who published the English Woman's Journal have sometimes been described as the 'Langham Place Group', after the second address at which the journal offices and associated enterprises were located.²¹ This was a small group of women working closely together towards a clearly defined set of shared goals. If writers and shareholders of the periodical are included, around 30 women were involved practically in the activities at Langham Place. This research revealed that more than 145 women counted themselves friends of Barbara Bodichon. Only a small number of these friends shared her interest in any particular issue. Even a lifelong close friend, Bessie Parkes, did not consistently share all campaigns with her. Langham Place was mainly a geographical focus, where space was used by women involved in their own schemes, and a meeting room was available. In lots of ways it functioned simply as a club, where a single woman could eat or meet a friend in comfort. The English Woman's Journal regularly focused on employment opportunities for women. The journal presented this concern with such sympathy and understanding that many unemployed women came to the offices in Langham Place seeking work. Further investigation suggested that Langham Place was as much a point of departure, of diversification, as a point of meeting. Bodichon received a stream of letters when she was abroad, from women at Langham Place complaining to her about their colleagues. Emily Davies wrote of her contempt for Bessie Parkes opinion when she '...begins to talk about centres and rallying points and so on, and showing that women can work together...(at L[angham] P[lace] of all places)'. Thus a large, rather fluid social circle of women existed. It included some women who shared a range of factors in their past, and supported some of a range of campaigns. This fluidity was also true of the projects in which the women were involved. Pioneering projects like the English Woman's Journal were abandoned after a relatively short time. Bedford College struggled to survive for the first twenty years. Perhaps these were strategies which had failed, or perhaps they were part of a succession of initiatives, each building on the success of the last.

²⁰Girton College. Bessie Rayner Parkes Papers. For a discussion of their early friendship see also Jane Rendall, 'Friendship and politics: Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-91 and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925).' in Jane Mendus and Jane Rendall. Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century. London, Routledge, 1989

²¹ e.g. Candida Ann Lacey ed. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group. London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1986.

One question which engaged attention was the unsatisfactory descriptions of the origins of the suffrage campaign, dating that origin to the suffrage petition of 1866. It was puzzling that this starting point should be the moment that the petition was presented to a man, John Stuart Mill. In the iconography of the suffragists there is a painting of Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett presenting the petition.²² They are bonneted, in crinolines, and their body language is subservient. It is a prettified, 'feminine' image which bears little relation either to the actual appearance of the two women as recorded in photographs, or to their characters. [At this time Emily Davies had successfully taken on the Cambridge Local examining board, and Elizabeth Garrett was a medical student in an all male establishment.] The painting suggests that these were the first tottering steps by fragile ladies. Painted in 1910 when the suffrage campaign was at its liveliest and most controversial, it does not do justice to the vitality of the early suffrage campaigners.

When the first suffrage committees were formed, following the petition, they were mixed and formally constituted. They had all the paraphernalia of executive and non-executive committee, subscription lists and so on. The petition had been handed to an all male Parliament by a man, (albeit a sympathetic and encouraging one). The impression given was that the discussion of female suffrage became 'real' when men became involved in it. The campaign structures became recognisable and familiar. Women were encouraged to take part. They did, chairing meetings and giving lectures. Some historians have argued that they were completely in control, only allowing men to become involved on their terms. This may well have been so, but nevertheless the campaign changed at that point. Women were allowed, even invited, into a public sphere. But they had to be prepared to conform to the conventions of that sphere. The independence of action and strategy that the female Anti-Slavery societies had won for themselves was lost by the suffrage campaign at this point. They appeared to have lost the power to draw on the cross-class support that they had won by their independence. They forfeited whole areas of the constituency that they had been able to call on when collecting signatures in 1866.

Until recently it has been considered that the campaign became embedded within the elite middle class, and did not escape from it until the early years of the following century. As part of this process, the beginning of the campaign was fixed at a point in time, and the quality and nature of origins before that date were obscured.

²²Bertha Newcombe Elizabeth Garrett. and Emily Davies. 'present' petition to J. S. Mill MP in Westminster Hall. 1910, Fawcett Library.



Plate 2. Elizabeth Garrett Anderson and Emily Davies 'present' Petition to John Stuart Mill MP in Westminster Hall. by Bertha Newcombe. 1910.

There are two strands to the traditional explanation of the beginning of the organised campaign. One was that it was the result of the amateurish efforts of some women of leisure, the second was that it was made possible by the benevolent encouragement of some enlightened men. Thus the Langham Place experiments in publishing and organising, and the Kensington Society, (a discussion club in an upper middle class drawing room) were the amateurish contribution of the women. Benevolent men, in the two radical and socially conscious societies, (the Law Amendment Society and the NAPSS) provided gallant encouragement. They did this first by championing the reform of married women's property rights. They then involved women in the great alternative 'Parliaments' of the NAPSS annual meetings, where women could contribute and deliver papers on women's issues.

This view of the origins of the suffrage campaign in particular ignored a number of factors. It underplayed the earlier role of women in Anti-Slavery. Alongside the very novel and effective campaign by women in England, strong transatlantic connections developed. Issues of women's suffrage were already being discussed by women in 1840 at the time of the Anti-Slavery Convention, and many of these women were those older suffrage organisation members in the late 1860's.²³ The real nature of the Kensington Society in personnel and function was also ignored. The Kensington Society may have colluded in this, since such a representation would enable frank private discussion of vital issues and strategies. The members had between them a wide range of experience of the public world, and had already been debating women's issues for anything up to twenty-five years. Perhaps this underplaying of pre-1866 activity and debate was the result of the form in which it was carried out. There was privacy, if not actual secrecy about the discussion of contentious issues, which made tracing the development of ideas difficult. Practical innovations were easier to examine, because they were partially disguised as benevolent or charitable exercises, such as the setting up of Bedford College. The reasoning and motivation were presented in their publicly acceptable (rather than privately subversive) form. This presented an opaque problem.

There were a number of very influential nation-wide organisations in the decades before 1866 which fostered connections between widely scattered groups of activists. It was important to examine the significance of connections built up through these organisations, and strategies derived from them. The sample group in this study consists of those women who have been traced from among the 1,499 supporters of the petition, and those Kensington Society members who did not sign the petition. [See Appendix 1]. Their number includes women who supported, or were closely related to someone who supported Anti-Slavery, Chartism, and the Anti Corn Law

²³ Clare Midgley. Women against slavery.

League, the Law Amendment Society, and the National Association for the promotion of Social Science. What lessons did these women learn from this involvement? Did they use networks and connections in similar ways to those employed by the earlier organisations? What strategies did they reject or amend? Many philanthropic and charitable organisations existed at this period, many of which were local initiatives to solve local problems, or provide services like schooling or hospitals. These often involved women to a surprisingly large extent. (This was true of school managing bodies, which recruited a high proportion of women up to 1860, though this number had dramatically reduced by that date)

How important was the experience gained in charitable activities which were the commonplace of middle class women's lives between 1848 and 1868? Its value could be seen to lie in connections and friendships made through such philanthropic activities and experience of committee procedures, keeping records and running effective organisations. Or were both of these aspects significant? Was there evidence of using strategies learnt in other organisations to serve them in their new ventures. Had they already been made aware of the limits of the possible, and did this hamper their progress?

2. The Kensington Society, the petition and its women

Through investigation of the 1866 suffrage petition, it is possible to gain some impression of the women who were sympathetic towards change, and to make more comprehensible the motives, work and connections between the women who supported change. The women examined in this study frequently used the word 'sympathy' to define and emphasise particular friendships. It was used to define a relationship of quality, and (rare) understanding. It was a quality within friendship which enabled partnership, co-operation, and action. Sympathy contributed to and fostered intellectual and creative growth. Sympathy allowed middle class women, many of whom were constrained within the private sphere, to reach out and make contact across the public world. Sympathy at once conformed to the emotional patterns expected of the middle class woman, and challenged them in very subversive ways. The need for such sympathy with unorthodox opinions led middle class women to call for support from women of different class background, and caused lack of sympathy within their own class.

The turmoil of anger and disgust caused by the exclusion of women from the 1840 London Anti-Slavery Convention generated sympathy between some women in England and American women delegates, which sustained their transatlantic friendships

for fifty years or more. Members of the Kensington Society, who initiated the 1866 suffrage petition, were brought together by shared sympathy in spite of differences of background. When Kensington Society members collected signatures for this petition, they drew on the sympathy of more than just friends and acquaintances. Emily Davies, when she met two of the Leigh Smith sisters in Algiers, felt their sympathy. She felt able to express her frustration at the opportunities available for a woman like herself. The sisters introduced her to a sympathetic circle of women who in their turn supported her in her campaigns over time. Sympathy was used to describe far more than commiseration, it was recognition of shared frustrations, shared ideals. It carried with it the promise of a range of practical options which such shared feelings could generate.

Attention has been paid by Liz Stanley [1985], Philippa Levine [1990] and Jane Rendall [1987]²⁴ to the webs of social and campaigning connections which underpinned the political religious and social life of the middle classes at this period. Consideration has also been given to the origins of the more recent women's movement, origins which have been described as 'first wave' feminism by Olive Banks and Philippa Levine²⁵ An earlier historian of the women's movement was Ray Strachey, who, flushed with the success of the campaign to win the vote for women in 1928, celebrated the suffrage petition of 1866 as the beginning of the campaign.²⁶ More recently historians, notably Jane Rendall, Philippa Levine and Barbara Caine,²⁷ have concentrated on key figures and on groups of elite women who were most active in feminist campaigns.

Yet these approaches, though enlightening, provide little information about, for example, the ordinary women upon whose support the leaders depended. It was necessary to discover who these women were and how they became involved in the movement for change. Identifying these 'women in the street' required an approach which moved beyond and behind those sources already used in the individual and group biographies discussed in the next section. These were 'women in the street', without whose half guinea subscription pamphlets could not have been printed, without whose time, signatures could not have been collected, without whose

²⁴Liz Stanley. Feminism and Friendship: Two essays on Olive Schreiner. Manchester, Department of Sociology, University of Manchester, 1985.

Philippa Levine, Feminist lives in Victorian England. Private roles and public commitment. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Jane Rendall. ed. Equal or different: women's politics 1800-1914. Oxford, Blackwell, 1987.

²⁵ Olive Banks. Becoming a feminist: The social origins of 'first wave' feminism. Athens, Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Philippa Levine. Feminist Lives.

²⁶Ray Strachey. The Cause: a short history of the women's movement in Great Britain. London, G.Bell and Sons, 1928.

²⁷Jane Rendal. Equal or Different, Philippa Levine. Feminist Lives., Barbara Caine. Destined to be wives, the sisters of Beatrice Webb Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.

enthusiasm the ideas of women's rights could have faded without trace. For, by 1866, the ideas, the connections, the enthusiasm must have already been in place in the culture of middle class women. Otherwise how did they dare to knock on the doors of mere acquaintances requesting support for women's suffrage, or send letters to complete strangers?

By the early 1860s some ground had already been laid. Some of these women had delivered papers on the platforms of NAPSS annual Meetings where hundreds of men and some women were observing them critically. Some had spoken in public to advocate that girls should have as good an education as boys, that women should have better employment opportunities, that married women should have property rights. Usually the papers that they delivered were reports on projects with which they had been involved practically, such as the setting up of an employment group for women, though sometimes they were more polemical. Bearing in mind that each of these suggestions could quite routinely be regarded by many men and not a few women as a subject for mirth if not horror, some foundations must have already been laid, and substantial self-confidence already be in place.

The year 1866 seems to have been a significant one for these women who were sympathetic to campaigns for 'women's rights'. Was it a point on a continuous line, or was it at the end for some, the beginning for others, and if so why? Was it a coming of age, or a rite of passage, through which campaigns moved from childhood and infancy to mature adulthood? These could only remain vague speculations without some body of evidence to investigate. It seemed that something had happened, not an event, but as a point in the lives of a great many more women than the existing texts suggested. What was needed was some way of gaining access to the life histories of the women who were involved in these changes.

The 'progress' of the lives of well known women, for example Frances Power Cobbe,²⁸ existed in biographies or memoirs. The auto/biographer often includes significant events as 'turning points' in their life. Cobbe talked of the change that took place when her father died, at which point she had to choose between the security of dependence on her brothers, or independence in reduced circumstances. She marked the decision for 'independence' with a symbolic act. (Or rather she chose to symbolise that moment in her autobiography with a metaphor.) She cut her hair shorter. If she was to be independent, she would no longer be able to afford a servant to put it up. If 1866 was a turning point for a large number of women, was there some way of measuring what had happened to them then? How had they arrived at that point, and where did they go from there? Some analysis has been attempted by Olive Banks and

²⁸ Frances Power Cobbe. Life of Frances Power Cobbe by herself. 2 vols. London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1894.

Philippa Levine.²⁹ (see Chapter One, section 3.) Their work was innovative, but highly selective, looking in detail at small groups of women over half a century and spanning nearly four generations. A closer examination of a far larger group of ordinary women over a shorter period was required. Clare Midgley used membership lists of nineteenth century Anti-Slavery and pressure group organisations creatively, to build up a picture of links between their members.³⁰ Most membership lists only provided names, sometimes even lacking initials. Similar information was provided on subscription lists. This made the task very difficult. However four very detailed lists survived from the mid-1860s which include names and addresses for, in all, around 2,500 women. One was the membership list for the Kensington Society, a women's discussion group which met between 1865 and 1868³¹. Another, dating from 1864 was the Memorial to Cambridge University which asked for girls to be allowed to take the University Local Examinations. It was signed by 999 teachers, educators and influential people.³² The third was the membership lists for the London Association of Schoolmistresses which was founded in 1866.³³ The last, and longest was the list of those women who signed the suffrage petition presented to John Stuart Mill in June 1866. The printed list of 1,499 names and addresses was circulated to MPs and the press. Unlike most manuscript petitions to Parliament, it survived in this printed form, as an alphabetical list of names and addresses.³⁴

Using the evidence of the Kensington Society and Suffrage petition lists, a different type of investigation seemed possible. Here were two clearly defined groups of women at this particular period of time, between 1865 and 1867. They were groups of women who had a linking interest. In the first case they were members of an intellectual society. In the second, the women shared sympathy with the idea of women's suffrage. A study of these two 'ready-made' groups of women avoided many of the pitfalls of selection from which the work of Olive Banks and Philippa Levine³⁵ had suffered. At the same time the lists targeted those very groups of women who were felt to be originators of suffrage campaigns by historians like Ray Strachey,³⁶ who drew much of her evidence from oral testimony of women involved in the

²⁹Olive Banks. Becoming a Feminist. Philippa Levine. Feminist Lives.

³⁰Clare Midgley. Women against Slavery.

³¹Girton College. Emily Davics Papers. Members list of the Kensington Society. E.D.IX/ KEN 1. Lists of questions discussed. E.D. IX/ KEN 3.

³²ibid. E.H.Plumptre, Ant. Biaggi, Thomas A.Cock et al. Memorial to the Vice Chancellor and the Senate of the University of Cambridge. Privately Printed, 1864.

³³ibid. Schoolmistresses Meeting, 1866.

³⁴ Girton College, Blackburn Collection. Suffrage Pamphlets, 1868[sic]-1880 [A bound collection of pamphlets which includes the petition.]

³⁵Olive Banks. Becoming a Feminist. Philippa Levine. Feminist Lives.

³⁶Ray Strachey. The Cause.

campaign. These women remembered the Kensington Society and that particular petition as the first moves in the campaign.

Even with the problems which existed when researching the lives of women at this period, it was possible to obtain information on more than one third of the women on these two key lists. In addition, the addresses give an indication of geographical distribution and titles show marital status for many of the rest. Thus some substantial progress could be made towards answering two questions: who were the members of the Kensington Society and who supported suffrage in 1866 enough to sign a petition?

Sympathy appeared to enhance the complex networks of connections, and those connections penetrated deeper into the national class structure than had previously been recognised. The special nature of the petition source allowed access to women not usually in the public record, through census and street directories. What became clear was that the prime movers in the Kensington Society³⁷ had access to women from the middle and lower-middle class, and that this was the direction to which they looked when seeking support. Those who signed the suffrage petition were not just 'more of the same', affluent, well educated or intellectual like the Kensington Society members themselves. This suggested that its framers were less concerned with sheer numbers than with range of signatories. They could, presumably, have collected more than 1,499 names of women with similar backgrounds had they so wished. As has been suggested by Clare Midgley and Jane Rendall,³⁸ the particular generation of women, born before 1845, benefited from experiences of campaigns such as Anti-Slavery, and the limited increase in educational opportunities which were available to some middle class women. But the influence of these campaigns could be unexpected. Who they met at Queen's College, London or Bedford College, for example, might be far more significant than what they learned or how they were taught. Again, there are innovative strategies used by the women's societies in Anti-Slavery, which are not taken up by later campaigners. But connections between fellow campaigners are drawn on as a possible source of support.

As most writers acknowledge, the publication of the statistics of the 1851 census alerted public opinion to the 'problem' of the surplus of single women.³⁹ The group of women involved with the Kensington Society and collecting the suffrage

³⁷The prime movers in the Kensington Society are discussed in detail in Chapter Six, Section 4. The term 'prime mover' is used here to describe women who founded organisations, or who were Secretaries, Treasurers or Presidents of such organisations.

³⁸Clare Midgley. Women Against Slavery, Jane Rendall. Equal or Different.

³⁹The actual situation of single women at this period is discussed by Martha Vicinus in Independent Women. Work and Community for Single Women, 1850-1920. London, Virago, 1985. For a sample of contemporary reactions, see Jane Horowitz Murray. Strong Minded Women and Other Lost Voices from Nineteenth Century England. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1982.

petition were eager to improve the choices of those single women. They also included a higher than the national average of such women. Among their number were many who had resolved that 'problem' in their own practical way. The exploration of work and life experience of these women in this thesis is both narrative and statistical.

Feminist historians have been eager to discover a consistency of approach in the women of this period, 'feminism' before the word existed. It would have been pleasant to recognise an unified approach among these women, but there was little evidence of it. In many ways there were similarities to the feminism of the later twentieth century in the diversity of methods and choice of priorities. There was, however, shared dissatisfaction. There were shared aspirations. There was sympathy. There was a social bonding through family and friendship and across class. The striking feature of this bonding was respect for the opinion of the individual. Each woman appeared to make her own choices. There was no consensus over priorities, though there was debate about them. Each woman had to balance her own feelings, her own family situation and the implications of her decision to support a campaign. Her family might disapprove of the cause, they might also disapprove of her involvement in public activity. Helen Taylor,⁴⁰ when writing to a friend asking her to sign the 1866 suffrage petition, gave her the opportunity to concur with the sympathy that she anticipated, but she left her friend space to disagree. Individuality was crucial in the commitment of these women, and respect for that individuality underpins the women's attitudes to each other. Another aspect of this is the fact that some women changed their minds over time, as movements developed and their demands or strategies changed. At least three women who signed for women's suffrage in 1866 were against it not long afterwards, and one, Annette Akroyd, was, according to her son, an enthusiastic member of her local Anti-Suffrage League in the 1880s⁴¹.

When focusing on two 'generations' of 'first wave' activists, rather than the three or four that Olive Banks and Philippa Levine investigate, the question of the significance of generation becomes more pertinent. This study differs from theirs because their samples include women who grew up to benefit from changes which had been put in place by the women born before 1845, whereas the women in this sample were creating those changes. But even within this sample of women born in the half century before that date, there are clearly discernible generational differences, aspirations, expectations and achievements. Although the older women who set up Bedford College attended courses of lectures, they did not go on to teaching careers.

⁴⁰ Miss Helen Taylor (1831-1907) daughter of Harriet Taylor Mill. Worked as an actress for a short while. She helped to draft the 1866 Suffrage Petition and in Suffrage campaigning from that date. London School Board Member. Stood for nomination as a Parliamentary candidate.

⁴¹ Miss Annette Akroyd, later Mrs Beveridge. Bedford College student, later founded a school in India. Mother of William Beveridge. Correspondence in India Office Library, Beveridge papers. See William H. Beveridge. India Called Them. London, George Allen and Unwin, 1947.

The first few trial examinations for the University Local Examinations were open to older women, but after that they were closed to them. It was the youngest of these women, who became doctors or went to Girton or Newnham for an University education. The younger women did, however, depend upon the older women both for institutional and personal support. The second part of Chapter Three looks at the nature of the support given by older women to their younger friends.

Another aspect of generation and the differences between generations is the point in the female life pattern at which certain events occurred. Thus the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention impacted differently on women in their forties, active and already successful in innovative campaigns and independent Women's Committees, and on adolescent girls like Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes. The implications of signing a suffrage petition in 1866 would be different in kind for a twenty-one year old whose mother agreed with her, a forty year old single proprietor of a girls school who might lose pupils if parents disapproved, the wife of the Dean of Canterbury, whose husband's career could be affected by a wrong move on the part of his wife, or an old lady who signed on her death bed. This would have been not only in terms of consequences, but also in terms of expectations. The young girl could contemplate a future in which she might stand for Parliament. The old woman had nothing to lose.

3. The Literature and the questions raised by it.

Some women considered in this thesis have already received attention from historians and sociologists. Margaret Forster,⁴² Liz Stanley⁴³ and Olive Banks⁴⁴ have offered respectively, biographical, diagrammatic and statistical approaches. In 1988, at the start of this research, little other material on these early feminists was available

In recent years there has been an expansion of interest in organisations, particular groups of women, and explorations of gender and group biography,⁴⁵ Although all of these approaches were implicit in this thesis, none of the previous

⁴² Margaret Forster. Significant sisters. London, Secker and Warburg, 1984.

⁴³ Liz Stanley. Feminism and Friendship.

⁴⁴ Olive Banks Becoming a feminist. This was a complementary volume to her Faces of feminism. Oxford, Martin Robertson, 1981, and The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminism. 2 vols. Brighton Sussex, Wheatsheaf Books, 1985, 1986.

⁴⁵ Clare Midgley. Women Against Slavery. , Jane Rendall, Equal or Different.

Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. Family fortunes: men and women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850. London, Hutchinson, 1987.

Barbara Caine. Victorian feminists. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992.

Barbara Caine. Destined to be wives: the sisters of Beatrice Webb Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1988.

studies provided sufficient depth, or breadth to tackle the questions raised here. If, like Olive Banks⁴⁶ they used statistical analysis, they lost the rich individuality which the women that they investigated possessed. If they looked at heroines, or at groups of leaders⁴⁷ there was not sufficient emphasis on those many other women supporters involved. The detailed studies of particular points in time and of groups of friends interacting, (by Jane Rendall⁴⁸ for example,) were helpful in their meticulous analysis and attention to individuals, but inevitably the number of women that they could deal with was too small. Group biographies which considered the lives of connected women, notably Barbara Caine on the sisters of Beatrice Webb and Norma Clarke on the Jewsbury sisters, Felicia Hemans and Jane Welsh Carlyle,⁴⁹ offered methods of organising information, and an innovative approach. However the groups considered were infinitely smaller and, by their nature, more cohesive than the sample in this thesis. Individuality was central to the philosophy and involvement of these women. It was also important to do justice to the information which existed in such abundance on such a large group of largely forgotten women.

There are a number of studies of the history of suffrage and the campaigns for the improvement of women's education and employment opportunities which date from the 1920's and 1930's. Written shortly after the vote was won, they draw on personal recollection as well as written sources. An example of these is the biography of Sophia Jex Blake by Margaret Todd.⁵⁰ (In this case, the personal papers which the biographer drew on 'disappeared' after it was written.) They have some value still because some source material has not survived. They show how 'the history of suffrage' was presented to new voters. There are some problems with accounts such as those by Ray Strachey⁵¹ and Barbara Stephen⁵² as a direct consequence of the rich sources to which they had access. The role of some campaigners, for example Lydia Becker, (who did not sign the petition, though when she heard of it at the October Meeting of the NAPSS, she wished that hers had been the 1,500th signature) tend to be over emphasised. Others, equally active, such as Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy, receive little credit for their contribution. This stems partly from the infighting that went on in the early suffrage societies after 1868. Ray Strachey, in particular, provided

⁴⁶Olive Banks, Becoming a Feminist.

⁴⁷Margaret Forster, Significant sisters.

⁴⁸Jane Rendall, 'Friendship and Politics, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-91) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925) in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, Sexuality and Subordination, Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century. London, Routledge, 1989. and Jane Rendall, Equal or Different.

⁴⁹Barbara Caine, Destined to be wives. Norma Clarke, Ambitious heights: Writing, friendship, love- The Jewsbury sisters, Felicia Hemans, and Jane Welsh Carlyle. London, Routledge, 1990.

⁵⁰Margaret Todd, Life of Sophia Jex Blake. London, Macmillan 1918.

⁵¹Ray Strachey, The Cause.

⁵²Barbara Stephen, Emily Davics and Girton College. London, Constable 1927.

a deliberately gradualist, constitutionalist account of suffragism. The histories of Queen's College London and Bedford College, written slightly later tend to be celebrations of achievements, rather than critical analyses of the roles of these influential institutions⁵³ (Such a critical study would be a useful addition to the literature)

Biographies and memoirs have provided information on some individuals. Much incidental personal information has been gleaned from autobiographies, biographies, memoirs and family histories of the women or their relatives published during the last three decades of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. The main problem with this type of material is its focus. When a woman is the subject, the emphasis is often on self-denying rather than self promoting behaviour, on piety rather than passion. Whole areas of life such as political attitudes, personal relationships (let alone the practicalities of organising a home and being an activist) are ignored. An isolated fictional portrayal of the home life of a campaigning woman is Charles Dickens' extremely critical portrait of the household of Mrs Jellyby in *Bleak House* :

Mrs Jellyby, whose face reflected none of the uneasiness which we could not help showing in our own faces, as [her] ...dear child's head recorded its passage with a bump on every stair...received us with perfect equanimity. She was a pretty, very diminutive, plump woman of from forty to fifty, with handsome eyes, though they had a curious habit of seeming to look a long way off. As if they could see nothing nearer than Africa...Mrs Jellyby had very good hair, but was too much occupied with her African duties to brush it. The shawl in which she had been loosely muffled, dropped on her chair when she advanced to us, and as she turned to resume her seat, we could not help noticing that her dress didn't nearly meet up the back, and that the open space was railed across with a lattice work of stay lace- like a summer house. The room, which was strewn with papers...was...not only very untidy, but very dirty.⁵⁴

This account gives some indication of the daily pressures facing a middle class woman who had other preoccupations in addition to running a home. It also indicates the prevalent attitude towards her if she did. An actual campaigner, Mrs Mary Crudelius, founder of the Edinburgh Ladies' Education Association, had to satisfy the same male scrutiny as Mrs Jellyby. She was not found wanting:

Mrs Crudelius was a particularly good housekeeper. [Professor Laurie remarked after praising her grasp of principles, sound common sense and resoluteness of mind.] Hers was one of those families in which all appears to

⁵³Mary Glynn Grylls. *Queen's College, 1848-1948*. London, George Routledge, 1948.

Margaret Tuke. *A History of Bedford College for Women, 1849-1937*. London, Oxford University Press, 1939.

⁵⁴ Charles Dickens. *Bleak House*. London and Glasgow, Collins, [1853] 1953.

go on of itself. She seemed always to obtain excellent servants and never to part with them, but in her house all the elegant minutiae, of which only a lady's eye takes note, was regularly attended to.⁵⁵

Bearing in mind that Professor Laurie was contributing an obituary to a book commemorating Mrs Crudelius' work for the Edinburgh Ladies' Education Association, the attention he pays to her domestic arrangements is telling. How women, particularly teachers who worked long hours, actually managed their lives to include work, public commitment and the daily drudgery of keeping themselves and their dependants warm clean and fed remained very much a mystery. Charity, in its private manifestations, was also often ignored by biographers. It appears to have been as private an aspect of their lives as their intimate relations with others.

The late nineteenth and early twentieth century biographies and memoirs were most useful where they 'dropped names'. An overview of networks of friendship could be built up by careful tracking of references to friends and acquaintances who were well known. This only worked upwards in the social scale, however. Virtually no attention was paid to interaction with social inferiors, most notably domestic servants, with whom women were in daily contact, or with whom they shared a home. The tantalising number of trades people who signed the suffrage petition cannot be accessed through the biographies of the women who may have been their customers.

The number of women felt to be worthy of a biography were pitifully few. Indeed there are remarkable and active feminists like Bessie Parkes, Helen Taylor, Jessie Boucherett, Isa Craig Knox or Emily Faithfull whose biographies have yet to be written in spite of the scale of their achievements and the wealth of primary source material available to the researcher. In recent years, some have felt that biographies of individuals can be problematic. There has been a move away from the biographies of individual 'heroines' towards variations on the theme of collective biography. An early example of this was Significant Sisters [1984] by Margaret Forster.⁵⁶ Forster approached what she described as the 'grassroots of active feminism' through the lives of eight women who led campaigns on a variety of issues, from Caroline Norton to Marie Stopes. Three of these women, Elizabeth Garrett, Emily Davies and Josephine Butler were in the group dealt with in this thesis, and the biographical chapter on each was a good introduction to their lives as activists, though these were basically 'potted biographies'. The underlying rationale for this book is the introduction of a few more heroines to the existing canon. This aim and the fairly traditional approach, led to the presentation of the lives of these women as 'single minded', focusing on specific achievements, and only partially acknowledging their range and versatility.

⁵⁵Katharine Burton. A Memoir of Mrs Crudelius. Edinburgh, Privately printed, 1879. p.302.

⁵⁶Margaret Forster. Significant Sisters.

Olive Banks, in Becoming a Feminist, the Social Origins of First Wave' Feminism, [1986]⁵⁷ considers a group of about ninety women and some men. The oldest cohort were born in the 1770s and some of the youngest cohort were still alive in the 1960s, a span of nearly 200 years. She focuses on their activities between the 1840s and 1928. This book is a companion to her two-volume Biographical Dictionary of British Feminists.⁵⁸ Her sociological approach is to look at the background and upbringing of this group to discover which factors might predispose a woman to become a feminist. She considers class, religious and political background, relationship with mother and father, across her four groups. She attempts the assessment of change over time. Generation is acknowledged as a factor in the experience of these people and Banks divides them into four 'cohorts' as an organising principal. The first group consists of people born before 1828, the second of those born between 1828 and 1848, the third of those born between 1849 and 1871, and the final group born between 1871 and 1891. Banks makes maximum use of the fairly fragmentary information available to her, on what is, after all, an extremely limited group of very exceptional people. Her methodology is thorough but problematic, bearing in mind the small number of people examined. However her categories of formative experience have been useful in this analysis. This is a brief book, and further information about the people she discusses is available in her biographical dictionary. This, again, only deals with a small elite. The evidence which she uses (for example, to establish quality of relationship with mother and father,) is not specified. Though she does make allowances for generational differences, the scale of the study is such that each of the four groups so small as to be hardly statistically viable. Each cohort has a maximum of 25 people. This could be sufficient if there was full information on each person. However information tends to be patchy on middle class women of this period, and more especially on those women born before 1848.

The initial impetus for this research came from the work of Olive Banks, who demonstrated that it was possible to attempt a meaningful and convincing analysis using the fragmentary material available. Her methodology was workable with a group of several hundred women. This research could deal with nearly seven times the number in her sample. With the decision to concentrate on the Kensington Society and the women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition, the number of women upon whom information was available rose to more than 1,500, all of whom were born before 1845. The problems caused by the arbitrary nature of the group she had chosen and its size were thereby avoided, though naturally other problems arose.

⁵⁷Olive Banks, Becoming a Feminist.

⁵⁸Olive Banks, The Biographical Dictionary of British Feminism. 2 vols. Brighton, Sussex, Wheatsheaf Books, 1985.

Another sociologist whose work has been influential, if only by raising questions which refuse to go away, is Liz Stanley. Her sustained analysis of what she describes cautiously as Auto/Biography has been pursued over a number of years in a variety of form/ats. Her pamphlet Feminism and friendship: two essays on Olive Schreiner⁵⁹[1985] raised the possibility of attempting group biography using networks of friendship, though without actually providing a satisfactory method of achieving it. In her most recent volume, The Auto/biographical I⁶⁰ [1992], a collection of earlier essays on biography, Stanley suggested that:

The conventional 'microscope ' model of biography suggests that biographic truth lies in the amassing of irrefutable verifiable detail....One consequence is that the biographer as a collecting, selecting interpreting omnipresence is textually denied the facts, once assembled speak for themselves, biographers merely draw conclusions from them... Biographies are ideological accounts of lives in which specific incidents, behaviours and attributions of character are divorced from the specific contexts these arose in, to constitute and confirm a more general and apparently trans-situational biographical self. This is then used to read back in the life as an explanatory framework for understanding and drawing together otherwise unrelated ad hoceries....Another important convention within modern biography is the focus on a single, unique subject. This focus strips from a subject's life the multitude of others it was peopled with, and sees them not as an equal among their fellows but as someone different in kind Thus this de-socialising of the subject is not seen as consequential producing a highly particular- and individualised- 'knowledge' about them, but as merely a product and proof of their 'greatness'.

This approach tied in closely with the emphasis of this thesis, but was not tremendously helpful in suggesting the methodology whereby this end could be achieved Stanley's analysis was really most helpful as analysis. She emphasised that:

The spotlight approach obscures and makes insignificant what was important in the daily lives of those who became the subjects of biography: their relationships with others, how they were seen and treated by them, how they responded to these others. Stripping this fabric of relationships down to a select few 'significant' (as seen by the biographer, perhaps as seen by the subject) others has implications for the view of 'the self' that modern biography inscribes. It promotes a particular ontological view, one which treats the subject as a hub in the centre of a wheel with few spokes, the epicentre of their world. Behind these choices lie the biographer's assessment of whom they deem to be important, and who not- and inevitably such assessments derive from more than an 'objective' reading of their importance to the subject's life.. [Faderman] ...recognises two important things: that there are large temporal differences in how friendship is defined (i.e. its meaning is socially constructed,)

⁵⁹ Liz Stanley Feminism and Friendship.

⁶⁰Liz Stanley, The Autobiographical I Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1992. pp 155-6

and that in past times women's friendships were seen as a central social relationship; while the focus of modern biography is usually on marriage and other kinds of heterosexual sexual relationship and is a reflection of current definitions and understandings, not necessarily those of the times and places of the biography's subjects.⁶¹

Stanley also articulated the problems which existed when defining friendship, a development beyond the simple web diagrams which she used in Feminism and friendship:

'Friendship' can encompass different kinds of ties and bonds between people. Relatedly the significance and extent of friendships will differ for different people and different meanings will be attached to these friendships not only by their protagonists but also in relation to the particular time period and social context they take place within. The friendship patterns of even one person are highly complex and variegated and are socially and temporally located. Friendship links are positive and negative...they change over time; and they are interconnected with each other. Friendships are not necessarily nor uniformly about 'love' but can encompass dislike as well as like, respect instead of love, influence instead of sympathy.⁶²

Stanley effectively undermines both auto/biography as source of 'fact', and the process of writing it, by inserting, or rather recognising the existence of the author as an essential element. She does not, however, undermine the necessity for the enterprise, suggesting, rather, a far more complex process. Stanley appears to argue that the author must be open about her/his own doubts and shifts of interpretation, but has yet to proffer a methodology which can allow this kaleidoscopic or many-angled approach to work as a linear text, which 'thesis' convention requires. It is like a patchwork, a two dimensional hexagonal quilt which could be read in any direction. (Stanley tends to encourage the proliferation of metaphor) But yet patchwork is the combination in a pattern of disparate, if not totally alien, elements. These include patterned fabrics and mixes of colour. However the whole has to be harmonious in terms of tone and colour. The desired end is a perfection, in aesthetic terms, of the pattern, (light and shadow, building blocks etc.) But it must also function satisfactorily as bedcover or decorative hanging. For the historian, the pattern represents shifts in interpretation and the evidence of those shifts. There are also methodological contrasts, and approaches which use different presentational techniques.

The techniques of group biography have been ably demonstrated by Barbara Caine[1988]⁶³ and Norma Clarke[1990].⁶⁴ Both writers consider a small group of women in painstaking detail, looking both at the development of each woman

⁶¹ *ibid.* p217.

⁶² *ibid.* p. 219.

⁶³ Barbara Caine. Destined to be wives.: the sisters of Beatrice Webb

⁶⁴ Norma Clarke, Ambitious Heights.

individually, and at her interaction with the others of the group. Caine uses Beatrice Webb and her sisters as the focus for an intensive study of the everyday detail of the lives of middle class women. She considers their life patterns; childhood, adolescence, marriage, (or not) and parenthood (or not). She compares and contrasts these developmental inevitability with their actual lived out realities. She tries to assess the different parts which nature and nurture played in shaping the lives of sisters. When looking at a much larger group of women, Caine's work encouraged a more thorough investigation into the fabric of women's lives, the patterns of life as well as its incidents, and the interaction of incident and pattern. The richness and complexity which she revealed in the individuality and interaction of these sisters has proved helpful here, contributing towards an understanding of how families of sisters, such as the Leigh Smiths, could be so different. (Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon, artist and campaigner, had two sisters, Anne and Bella. One was fragile and eccentric, the other the very conventional wife of an Indian Army Major General.) Barbara Caine's work also helped consideration of how others could remain so apparently similar, as did the seven unmarried Quaker Ellis sisters, in rural Leicestershire. This was a book which expanded the scope of this study by proving the possibility of penetrating deeper into the diurnal patterns of women's lives.

Norma Clarke looked at the friendship of four creative women, over time. They were the Jewsbury sisters, Felicia Hemans and Jane Welsh Carlyle. This was a literary study, but offered an example of a way in which the friendship between a group of women could be explored, using their creative writing as evidence. The four women were immediate contemporaries of most of the women considered in this thesis though none of them were included in that sample. They also moved in very similar social and literary circles, and so this close scrutiny of their interaction had added relevance for this thesis.

Barbara Caine, in Victorian Feminists⁶⁵ considers the philosophical and theoretical standpoint of four leading feminists, all of whom are included here. She tries to discover whether there was a 'feminist philosophy' which was common to Emily Davies (remembered for her educational campaigns), Frances Power Cobbe (who in her journalism articulated radical ideas on women's issues), Josephine Butler, (who led women into unfamiliar territory with her campaign for the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts) and Millicent Garrett Fawcett (Suffrage leader and younger sister of two women in my sample). Caine found individuality and overlapping areas of agreement rather than a consistent common philosophy. This book was informative on the theoretical stance taken by just three of the women in my sample. Their lack of over-arching common ground coincided with the conclusion here. This was that

⁶⁵ Barbara Caine Victorian feminists.

individual positions were being worked through, rather than that a common philosophy was being worked out. It was helpful to have this survey of the ideas of four key women at this period. It would have been useful, though, had Caine discussed the rationale behind the practical methods employed by these women to promote change.

Two historians who have recently concentrated on a very similar group of women to those examined here are Jane Rendall and Philippa Levine. Ideas developed in Feminist lives in Victorian England, by Philippa Levine, published in 1990 appeared to intersect with this thesis, and indeed overlap with it in a number of areas. The group, the period covered, and the aspects of feminist endeavour (education, employment and suffrage), were very similar. However, this thesis differs from Philippa Levine's in a number of important respects. Both methodology, and the conclusions reached are rather different. Levine studied a group of around 200 English women, and their activities from the 1850's to the turn of the century. This limitation of personnel and expanded time scale at once straddles time broadly and is geographically restricted. She explains that:

A central part of my research was the formulation of a collective biography, a prosopography of feminism in the period c.1850-c.1900. Its function is twofold: first to pinpoint the details of who the feminists are and whether their life cycles reflect the choices they made in that political arena, and secondly to draw attention to the collective features of organisation so crucial to the feminism of this period, and evinced by the extensive overlap of personal and political networks. This prosopographical element has allowed me to look at the backgrounds of these women, their social location and religious activities, their marital status, their other interests and activities. In turn the information was used to establish whether or not the active proponents of a feminist voice were in fact being drawn from a narrow segment of English society, insensitive to, or unaware of the needs and lives of those differently situated.⁶⁶

Like Banks, Levine covered four generations of 'first wave feminists'. She too looked at the background of a group of women. Unfortunately she did not list her sample of 194 women, or give information about date of birth to indicate 'generation', even when describing the women's experience. As generation can be proved to be influential in experience, attitudes and aspirations, this was regrettable.

The number of women whom Levine considered, and who they actually were was never completely clear, so it was difficult to compare with this larger sample which was restricted to members of the Kensington Society, and those women who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition. As such it was (presumably, since no such inclusive information was given on Levine's group) at once more homogeneous and more

⁶⁶ Philippa Levine, Feminist Lives.

inclusive. It was also a group of women born before 1845, with only one or two exceptions. In contrast to this sample, many of Levine's group were born later. They would have had, as single young women, greater access to the educational and employment opportunities available after 1870. For this reason the choices available to them were very different to those available to the present sample, which includes only women in Levine's two earlier cohorts. This sample of older women appears to be different from the group of feminists born after 1845, in respect of opportunities available to them. Where each generation of women was achieving some change, there was a cumulative effect. The later generations used and built upon the advances of the earlier generations. This was particularly true of education, (lack of, as well as access to) which was not fully explored in Levine's study.

The size of the sample in this research meant that it was possible to question some of Levine's assertions about the class of women supporting feminism publicly at mid-century. It was likely that her group consisted mainly of 'leaders' who were relatively well documented, and her findings on class may well be true for that group (though there are some inconsistencies in her conclusions on family occupations within this group). This thesis aimed to bring into focus 'rank and file' women, the broader group of 'supporters' which enabled an 'idea' to turn into a 'campaign'.

Though this thesis considered the future commitments of these women beyond 1870, there is more concentration on where they came from, and on the practical strategies used and developed up to that date. It was helpful to separate the earlier development and formulation of strategies from the later period when organisations took on a more conventional form. These two stages appear to be significantly different.

Levine suggested that there was evidence of a tendency to delay marriage which appeared to be common among those women in the group studied who did marry. There was a noticeably small number of offspring of these feminist marriages. Of women whom Levine mentioned, and who may therefore be in her sample, Mary Llewelyn Davies had at least four children, and Louisa Garrett Smith had four young children when she acted as secretary to the suffrage committee in 1866. Harriet Taylor in fact had three children, her two sons were older than Helen, not the one or two that Levine suggests.

The position of the 'spinster' altered during the period covered, and Levine suggested that 'Towards the close of the century spinster hood began to take shape as a concrete political position deemed preferable to marriage among a portion of the feminist community'. This thesis suggests that, rather than feminists choosing spinster hood, spinsters were merely a significant proportion of those choosing feminism among women born before 1845. Levine argued that:

For feminist women, the adoption of principles derived from a feminist perspective both clarified and clouded their lives. Whilst it clouded the gendered configuration which controlled even the definition of femaleness, it served to make their social interactions in a non feminist environment less comfortable. Their re-appropriation of adulthood [Levine had earlier, p.42, argued that for Victorian women " there was no simple divorce between childhood and adulthood; the continuity of their dependence and their exclusion from full citizenship blurred the distinctions between the two"] through choice and independence set them at odds with prevailing custom and law but allowed them to establish freedoms long denied on the basis of sex.⁶⁷

Marriage brought into focus the class of the women, as overwhelmingly bourgeois Levine separated fathers from husbands, but found that this did not produce any noticeable class shift In her sample there were no military or clerk husbands Again it would be useful to know how her sample of women was composed, since, for example, one of Barbara Leigh Smith's sisters, and supporters in the English Woman's Journal married a soldier, as did Alice [Garrett] Cowell⁶⁸. Both were members of groups of sisters at the centre of the group examined. She acknowledged the problems of classification which these broad categories produce. which do not take into account the range of wealth and poverty which could exist within what might seem to be a homogeneous occupation group. This area of class/ occupation of the women, their fathers and husbands is an area where a larger group produces rather different results These could be usefully compared with Levine's actual sample, to discover, perhaps, if her findings refer only to the elite supporter, and not to the rank and file, or if again there is a generational difference.

These problems are as much problems of sources as of interpretation. There is an urgent necessity to collect and collate information about the women of this period, since theories are being propounded upon a shifting information base. Levine does not appear to have used directories or census returns. These give an indication of family size, and occupational status, but cannot of course, be relied on to offer a significant indication of a woman's 'experience.' Census returns offered a snapshot of a single night, dependent for accuracy upon the knowledge and veracity of the head of household. It was often only in the light of other information that a women seen in the census could have areas of her life fleshed out. The information could be inaccurate, if not downright misleading. An example is 'Mrs Lewes' of Blandford Square, whose occupation was described as 'Wife' and whose age was given as 40. In that same month, this same woman, Miss Mary Ann Evans [aged forty one] wrote

⁶⁷ibid.

⁶⁸Mrs Alice Cowell was a London School Board member, and a younger sister of Elizabeth Garrett Anderson. She was too young to sign the suffrage petition in 1866.

Silas Marner. The shifts resulting from using these sources produce make very different interpretations possible Levine's 194 are more accessible, and different from, the sample on which this thesis is based .

Levine declared boldly that :

...women embraced a feminist perspective in every area of their lives, a massive step in an era when the full and stifling weight of bourgeois ideology was at its peak, and when failure to conform to its directives constituted not merely rebellion but moral degradation To be identified as a feminist in mid- or late nineteenth century England was to court contempt, ridicule and hostility. At the same time, though, feminism undoubtedly offered encouragement and sympathy to women striving to repudiate the role to which their sex traditionally assigned them ⁶⁹

There are problems with this assertion, in that issues were considered and negotiated separately Even when looking at minor involvement, such as subscribing, compared with prime mover status, there were virtually no women who had a blanket involvement with every issue among the first two generations. Here again a significant difference between the later and earlier groups in Levine's study could exist Levine suggested that social and campaigning networks interlocked, and highlighted the Kensington Society as evidence of this:

Women found kinship with each other in their moments of relaxation as much as on the campaign trail, and those familiar names which swell the membership lists of women's political pressure groups are also prominent within a distinctive feminist social calendar. Political co-operation and good friendship were closely allied and a body such as the Kensington Society offers a good illustration of this tendency...[she lists 14 members and then continues]...We might equally be looking at the membership list of any one of a number of feminist organisations, or at the guest list of a feminist hostess. It is the integration of these elements offered by the Kensington Society which suggests so strongly the dovetailing of the social, the political and the intellectual within the feminist community.

This research revealed, however that the Kensington Society was not at all the integrated organisation which Levine describes.

When looking at employment, and education she is a little dismissive of the education campaigns which she saw as representing energies primarily directed 'upwards to a narrow class constituency...The recipients of all these advances were a predictable cross section of the daughters of professional and business families.'⁷⁰ She underplays the perception of some of these educators that state schools were actually doing the job of educating girls rather better than were the middle class schools. She

⁶⁹Philippa Levine, *Feminist Lives* p.60

⁷⁰ibid. p.131

also ignores the part that fees played in middle class schools, and the 'trickle down' effect that the education of future teachers appears to have produced in the widening number of girls schools opened throughout the later part of the century. She did examine the choices which middle class families made in education in respect of the women in her study, producing resentment when their brothers were favoured. She also acknowledges the achievements of Frances Buss and also draws attention to the fact that 'The entrance into the colleges of women well beyond the usual student age is a significant comment on the need that the colleges fulfilled'. (This was also, however, a comment on the education of these women, many of whom had to work hard in difficult circumstances, to make up the deficiencies of their primary education before matriculating)

Levine was dismissive of the role of experience in philanthropy as an element informing the strategies employed by the women in her study. She finishes on the note that, for her group of women:

Feminism informed their decision making at every step. It shaped their marital choices, their child rearing, their social calendars and contacts. It coloured their understanding of political issues, their assessment of politicians, and political groupings, and their choice of activities.

When looking at the role of friendship, the larger group offered examples of women 'on the margins', sometimes even embedded in families which were hostile to new ideas about women. It also revealed the methods by which contacts could be made and maintained in spite of isolation. These were not the women in the centre, with existing circles of social and political contact. Observation of them allowed exploration of ways in which ideas and campaigns were disseminated. The thirty or so women of the Kensington Society must have collected an average of fifty signatures each. How was this achieved? These women sympathisers, isolated yet connected, were a group that seems to have been ignored by historians, yet their support, and the widening support of others like them, was essential for eventual success of the suffrage, and other, campaigns.

Levine characterised the Kensington Society as typical of the existing social circles, bringing together members of an already existing group. This thesis argues that the Society was deliberately used to bring into contact women who did not necessarily already know each other. Its membership list, like the Suffrage petition list, actually provides a unique 'geological' cross section of the strata of feminism (as it existed in the mid 1860's.) It is not possible to agree with Levine's conclusion that there was an all embracing 'feminist perspective' among these women, which brought them together in a number of campaigns. There may have been a blanket enthusiasm in

some, like Bessie Parkes. Many individuals seem to have decided on each issue, or stage of an issue on its merits, as it arose.

Using innovative approaches and informative content, the material published in the last ten years, discussed above, has changed the perception of the Victorian middle class woman. In order to achieve such an alteration in perception, research has tended to be detailed, looking at a small group of friends, (e.g. Rendall, [1987], Clarke [1990])⁷¹, a family (Caine [1988])⁷², one organisation, (Midgely [1992])⁷³, an elite over time (Banks [1986], Levine [1990])⁷⁴, or the ideas of leaders (Forster [1984], Caine [1992,])⁷⁵. Only Davidoff and Hall [1987]⁷⁶ took a broad spectrum of families for their investigation, but their purpose was to examine the interaction of class and gender, with families being used to demonstrate this. Inevitably there is a need for more, and larger scale enquiries. All the studies mentioned above have covered long periods of time, rather than a broader spectrum of women over a shorter period. At the same time, post-modernist concern about 'lived experience' and recent questioning of the emphasis on divisions of public private and separate spheres underline the need to avoid bold assertions. There do, however, seem to be five areas which recent researchers have not sufficiently examined

Firstly, it was found that (with the exception of Caine [1988]⁷⁷ using a family of sisters, and Midgley [1992]⁷⁸ using the members of the Female Anti Slavery Societies), none of these studies dealt with a clearly defined group. The historian knew exactly what her organising principle was, but very often this selection and choice were governed by the availability of information. This resulted in the same group of people being studied; those who had written, been published, whose families or institutions treasured their papers. The two groups of women investigated here are brought to together by shared interest in their own time, through their membership of the Kensington Society between 1865 and 1867, or their support for women's suffrage in May and June 1866.

Secondly, only Davidoff and Hall [1987]⁷⁹ range over large numbers of people, and their study is essentially concerned with the making of middle class family values.

⁷¹Jane Rendall . 'Friendship and Politics', and Equal or Different. Norma Clarke. Ambitious Heights.

⁷²Barbara Caine. Destined to be Wives.

⁷³Clare Midgley. Women Against Slavery.

⁷⁴Olive Banks. Becoming a Feminist. . Philippa Levine. Feminist Lives.

⁷⁵Margaret Forster. Significant Sisters. Barbara Caine. Victorian Feminists.

⁷⁶Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. Family Fortunes.

⁷⁷Barbara Caine. Destined to be wives.

⁷⁸Clare Midgley. Women Against Slavery.

⁷⁹Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. Family Fortunes.

The small groups of leaders studied by Levine and Banks⁸⁰ could be representative of a far larger proportion of the population, or purely an eccentric, well recorded minority. Levine [1990]⁸¹, for example, defines the class contours for feminism according to the group which she studied. The larger sample in this thesis did not consist of more of the same, but included some lower middle class and working class women. The implications of this for the subsequent support for and success of the suffrage campaign were intriguing, to say the least.

Thirdly, the lack of information or discussion of the rank and file supporter is disappointing. Were they not discussed because they did not exist? If they did exist, what part did they play? The suffrage petition study has revealed some very fascinating women who were such rank and file supporters.

Fourth, and linked to both the previous areas, was the unanswered question as to whether generalisations about 'first wave feminism' based on the study of an elite group would prove to have any validity for the larger group.

Finally, though the issue of generation was raised, it was never sufficiently explored. Two aspects of generation provoked questions which remained unanswered. One was the influence of older women on activists themselves born before 1845. The other was the impact of events, such as the Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840, on women of different ages. For Elizabeth Reid, born in 1794, the practical consequence was to improve the educational status of women by founding a college. For Barbara Leigh Smith, aged twelve, it was an event to arouse adolescent idealism. She in turn used the opportunities which Reid provided at Bedford College and went on to organise the first Married Women's Property petition in 1856.

4. Methodology*

Several factors affected the choice of methodology for this thesis. One was the need to investigate a large number of women, and their campaign involvement and life patterns over at least twenty years. Another was the interest which lay in the individuality of their lives, and the choices they made. It was necessary to find ways of recording the interaction between them, in networks of friendship and support. There was a need to discover the practical ways in which they used networks in the service of the causes which they espoused.

⁸⁰Olive Banks. *Becoming a Feminist*. , Philippa Levine. *Feminist Lives*.

⁸¹ibid.

* See Appendix 1

The two groups, the Kensington Society and the women who signed the 1866 female suffrage petition were selected for several reasons. The fact that they belonged to this particular organisation, and that they signed this particular petition, implies that individuals in each group were already known to each other. The Kensington Society recruited by carefully vetted personal recommendation, but was designed to bring together women who might not necessarily already know each other. The purpose of the society was general, not specific, so it was inclusive, rather than exclusive. On the issue of suffrage itself, half the members of the Kensington Society signed the suffrage petition, and half did not. Because it was a forum for debate, there was room for a wider range of opinions than there was in a campaigning organisation like the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts [LNA], or a professional organisation like the London Association of Schoolmistresses [LAS]. The principle for selection as a member of the Kensington Society was intellect and 'sympathy', both qualities which were directly relevant to this enquiry. The society included many well known activists of the day.

The 1499 women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition have that commitment in common. But in order to have signed, they must have been asked by someone. Each canvasser would try to raise more signatures, either by appeal in person to neighbours and acquaintances, or by letter. The correspondence of Helen Taylor included a series of letters which are responses to her invitation to sign this petition. She also preserved a draft letter of request, perhaps as a template for others that she was to write. These letters show the sort of person to whom she would have appealed with this rather controversial idea, and the terms in which she couched that appeal. There are some refusals, and the wording of these was also informative.

This group which fanned out from the Kensington Society members and their friends who framed the petition includes women who, with some level of intensity, shared a goal at that moment in time. It also demonstrated the process of using women's networks to achieve a clearly defined, limited objective: at least one hundred 'good' names in favour of the proposal. In the event, the average number of signatures collected by Kensington Society members who supported the proposal was around 50 each.

It could be argued that to base a thesis upon such a small sample of women, and one which shows so little homogeneity, could not be valid, either statistically or theoretically. Only 1,499 women, only signing a petition, only giving this support in June 1866. Some of these women had changed their minds only a year or two later. This was not evidence of commitment as might later be demonstrated by membership of a suffragist organisation, marching, going to prison, stitching banners, gathering petitions with thousands of signatures. However this petition had some unusual

features, which place signing it in a rather special light. Unlike most petitions, it was planned that it would be printed in full and distributed to members of parliament and the press. It was therefore a very public document, and women who feared disapproval of family, friends, or employers would not have signed.

The petition was collected at a time of intense public discussion of the Second Reform Bill. Mass public lobbying, for example by the Reform League, would have brought discussion of suffrage issues into every home. For some families, this petition was clearly a logical extension of their position on male suffrage. The short term goal of the women who collected this petition was limited. John Stuart Mill had suggested that one hundred signatures would be sufficient for a petition that he could present to the House of Commons. The criterion for collection was high, and the quality of the woman signing, not the quantity was valued. In the light of this, the range of class, experience, age and geographical spread takes on added significance. Those who signed were not, as might have been expected of such a small petition, members of a small closed middle class group. The women who initiated the petition were able, in the very short time available, to reach out to the very widest range of people who might offer support. That the petition was later used as an address list to canvass support for subsequent petitions, and that at least one woman who was the only person to sign in her town later recruited more than a hundred subscribers to a suffrage journal, highlights the possibility that these women were selected to sign because of very special qualities, or very specific disadvantages which possession of the vote would help to remedy.

As a source the petition provides a snapshot of a particular moment in time, a moment which was perceived to be of great significance in the development of the women's movement in Britain. This 'snapshot' can be compared best to the whole school photograph, in which a pupil can run round the back and appear twice, or the photograph of a crowd at a demonstration, rather than to the intimate family holiday snapshots, with their careful composition conveying the impression of a happy family, that letters or memoirs produce. These women are united in this one month by a particular common purpose, to which they have come, and from which they scatter to a wide range of places, both physical and intellectual.

The detail which the petition provided made it possible to build up a picture of the networks which could be brought into play by ordinary women at this period when seeking support. Used in conjunction with other lists, (college registers, membership and subscription lists) the petition could provide an in depth picture of the pattern of campaigning at this period. In this respect the petition contrasts with more conventional sources; biographies, letters, minutes of committees, the printed word generally, since it was published for a very specific purpose of demonstrating the range

women who supported the issue at that point of time. The unique value of the petition lies in its subversiveness. It subverted perceptions of what women might do in its own time. It valued the contribution of the charwoman beside that of the countess. In our own time it subverts concepts of historical data. It calls into question the assumptions of historians that if a sample of people behave in a certain way, this can be extrapolated to a whole community or class. If the petition were looked at purely in the light of information available in published biographies, letters, subscription lists, revealing about one tenth of the women who signed, the statistical results would show it to be a wholly middle class document. Using the census and Post Office directories, nearly half the women were identified, and, most notably, they are not overwhelmingly middle class. This, in turn, calls into question any attempt to characterise the other half who signed in any way except that they had moved home at least twice in the years between 1861 and 1871.

These lost women may be the 'same' as those found (in all their diversity) but the one certainty that there is about them is that their lives were less stable than the rest. As well as not staying at the same address, they did not subscribe to organisations, or attend colleges. They were not heads of household. They may have lived in the households of families whose name they did not share, as employees, lodgers or dependants. In short these women (lost as a result of these characteristics) are the very women for whom Barbara Bodichon, Emily Davies and Bessie Parkes were campaigning.

The two groups of women were overlapping and connected. Almost exactly half the sixty eight members of the Kensington Society had signed the 1866 suffrage petition, or been involved in collecting signatures, if they did not sign themselves. This offered an unique cross section of committed feminists at what is now being recognised as a particularly significant point in time. The very nature of a petition was that it was collected through personal, neighbourhood, and familial networks. This meant that it could be said with confidence that every woman who signed was known to at least one other woman that signed. By implication, via such connections, they were 'known' to the small group of women who were instrumental in organising and delivering the petition to Parliament. These women had established ground rules as to who might sign. Helen Taylor wrote to Barbara Bodichon:

I see no reason why the signatures should be confined to those who would profit by the plan if carried out. It would be perfectly reasonable for all women to ask for the Franchise for those among them who can fulfil the conditions at

present demanded of all men, just as men who are not £7 householders petition in favour of the present reform bill.⁸²

This comment was part of a dialogue between Helen Taylor, and the informal committee of Bodichon, Emily Davies, Bessie Parkes, Jessie Boucherett, Elizabeth Garrett and Jane Crow. This took place between 8th May, when written discussion of the petition appeared to have begun in earnest, and 7th June when the petition was complete.

Two groups emerge: one was women whose families were either members of the professional middle classes, professional women themselves or women who were householders in their own right. They appeared in biographical dictionaries, professional directories, or street directories. The other group was composed of lower middle class and working class women who were involved in businesses or occupations which were sufficiently stable and settled to allow them to reside at the same address for more than five years, so that they appeared in the census enumerators' returns, trades and street directories.

These two groups included around 600 women, leaving nearly a thousand women unrecorded. Included in the latter category were some twenty members of the Kensington Society itself. The significance of this lost group became clear when a woman about whom information has survived fortuitously was examined. This information survived because Ellen Nichols, a Kensington Society member, corresponded with her college friend Annette Akroyd.⁸³ Ellen was employed as a humble daily governess by a number of families in Petersfield, in Hampshire. She helped to support her pharmacist father and two younger brothers. At the same time she kept house for the men of her family. She was almost certainly one of several young ex-pupils of Bedford College who were working as governesses or teachers in small schools, who were members of the Society through the recommendation of Bedford College staff. Governesses would move frequently as their pupils grew up, and small schools commonly seem to have had shifting personnel in the period between the 1861 and 1871 censuses.

In London, many of the women from the families of trades people were identified through the census and trade directories. Other, unidentifiable, women were found at the addresses of established businesses. They were possibly lodgers, and their status remains a mystery. Perhaps one of them was that governess found dead of starvation in City of London lodgings, whose pathetic room was visited by Frances

⁸² Mill Taylor Papers Vol. XII 40-105 Helen Taylor to Barbara Bodichon. 9th May 1866..

⁸³ Beveridge Papers India Office Library. Annette Akroyd's early correspondence is not catalogued. It includes letters from Mary Ellen Nichols, who signs her letters 'Helen'.

Power Cobbe in her role as journalist on the Echo.⁸⁴ Another teacher, Miss Mondy, moved at least twice in about eighteen months. She appears first in a directory as proprietor of a school in Lewisham. She then signs the Suffrage Petition from a very poor working class district of Greenwich. She also attends a meeting of the London Association of Schoolmistresses in 1866, giving her address as 44, Charrington Street, Oakley Square, North London. This may be three different people, but even as relatives, three such women display a range of circumstances which lead to questions concerning the status of the 'lost' women. When examining the evidence it could not be assumed that the rest of the women were 'more of the same'. The very fact that they had disappeared suggested that they did not fall into the same categories as outlined above. Perhaps as many as two thirds of the women who declared their support for suffrage could have been the very displaced, disenfranchised type of woman who had been engaging the attention of the media since the revelations of the 1851 census sparked the 'surplus women' debate.

The membership of the Kensington Society included a good proportion of women who had worked for a living, or who had been educated for a future of work. The members included many of the women who had already been active in early campaigns. Many had shared a common experience of education, many were successful entrepreneurs, educators or communicators. However, contrary to what had been previously suggested by Levine⁸⁵, it was actually the Kensington Society itself which introduced some of them for the first time.

The group of members who signed the petition included virtually all the most committed British feminists of the period. The Society had provided the circumstances in which a diverse group of feminists could formulate their ideas and plan future strategies. Its composition took on an even greater significance, as a possible catalyst at a crucial juncture in the history of British feminism.

Statistically, the Suffrage Petition data provided valuable insight into the class, marital status, geographical distribution and occupation of the rank and file supporters of the idea of female suffrage. It also provided evidence of family connections and complex networks of campaigning, friendship, and neighbourliness used to gather signatures from the extremities of the British Isles.

The scale of this enquiry, the prosopography of around 1,500 women, presented certain problems. While the size of the group enabled statistical analysis to be undertaken, the 'experience' of individuals was also essential to the enterprise. Therefore a number of differing, but complementary methodologies were applied. The information was gathered through the exploration of the data provided by the

⁸⁴ Frances Power Cobbe, Re-echoes. London 1876.

⁸⁵ Philippa Levine, Feminist Lives.

membership and suffrage petition lists. It has been applied in a variety of ways in order to build up as comprehensive and enlightening picture of origins connections and methods of early feminist activism as was possible.

The 'life experiences' common to most women, as children, adolescents, and adults, embedded within family and friendship networks, in receipt of education, or growing towards old age, were drawn from biographies, memoirs and census enumerators' returns. Letters and records built up a month by month chronology of the interactions which gathered together a group of women and in time enabled them to collect the suffrage petition. Through this chronology the mechanisms of societal organisation in an all-woman organisation can be revealed. The names and addresses of the women signing the suffrage petition allowed statistical analysis of geographical distribution, marital status, age, and occupation of women, and their publicly perceived class status through the occupation of their male family members. It was also possible to establish what proportion of the group were themselves householders.

The exploration of particular localities, such as Leeds, a twenty-mile radius around Robertsbridge on the Kent/Sussex borders, and Blackheath, South East London, revealed more of the mechanisms of petition collection, as well as providing evidence of class and family structure. Locality studies helped determine whether neighbourhood, or friendship and organisational links were more significant in the collection of signatures and demonstrate the geographical distribution of support for suffrage nation-wide, and in selected localities.

When the questions relating to methods and connections were examined, the complexities of family and friendship were demonstrated using network diagrams and broad family friendship 'trees' which could accommodate several dozen individuals at a glance. In order to show shared 'experience', and identity or diversity of interest, matrix diagrams which compare individuals and their experience allow the reader to explore a range of questions.

The pattern which has been adopted when approaching each section of the thesis has been to look at statistical generalisations as well as the greater depth and detail provided by individual lives. In this way the role of the individual with her own unique biography, and unique contribution to wider movements can be incorporated within a study of movements and organisations over a period of twenty years and some answers provided to the questions 'who?' and 'how?'

Methods of research and recording which have been used in the recent past ⁸⁶ were used alongside methods specially adapted for this thesis such as the grid or matrix diagram. A partially computerised database of the Kensington Society members and the women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition has been central to the research. To

⁸⁶Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist*, Liz Stanley, *Feminism and Friendship*.

this core group have been added a supplementary list of women and men connected with them through family or by friendship. Information on this supplementary group was used in relation to the sample women, and was not included in the statistical analysis.

A biographical search and a check against lists in the records of organisations was made. The biographical information has been sought in a variety of places since the number of actual biographies and memoirs about the women in this sample was small. There are few biographical dictionaries of British women.⁸⁷ There are some American dictionaries of biography which have been informative.⁸⁸ Standard biographical dictionaries like the Dictionary of National Biography⁸⁹ and Boase⁹⁰ are scantily provided with entries on the lives of women, though the recent missing persons supplement does go some way towards redressing this imbalance. (The current revision of the Dictionary of National Biography should go a long way to improving this situation.) It was possible to access information about some women through the entries for their husbands or other male family members. This was where the addresses were invaluable. Boase, for example, often gave the address at which a subject died, which sometimes matched an address in the petition.

Census and post office directories⁹¹ have provided about half the identifying information on the women in my sample. This increases not just the number of women about whom information is available, but the kind of woman included. Census returns, notwithstanding their inevitable inaccuracies and massaging of the facts, have the virtue of not being class specific. They also straddle the period of the two lists, 1865-1866. with detail of occupation, place of birth, relationship to head of household and age being provided in both 1861 and 1871. Interestingly enough, they are actually less useful for the middle class professional (in London, at least) because of the middle

⁸⁷ Olive Banks. The Biographical dictionary of British Feminism. 2 vols. Brighton, Sussex, Wheatsheaf Books, 1985.

Anne, Crawford, Tony Heyter and others, eds. Europa Biographical Dictionary of British Women, Over 1,000 Notable women from Britain's past. London, Europa Publications, 1983.

Dictionary of National Biography.

Edward T. James, ed. Notable American Women 1607-1950. Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1971.

Patricia E. Sweeny. Biographies of British Women, an annotated bibliography. London, Mansell, 1993.

Jennifer S. Uglow. ed. Macmillan Dictionary of Women's Biography. London, Macmillan, 1982.

⁸⁸e.g. Edward T. James. Notable American Women, 1602-1950. Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1971.

⁸⁹Dictionary of National Biography n.b. this is currently under revision, and should provide more information on women in the new version.

⁹⁰ Frederick Boase. Modern English Biography. Truro, Netherton and Worth, Quaker Dictionary of Biography Mss. Friends House Library, London. Who was who 1897-1915. 6th ed. London, A. and C. Black, 1988, etc.

⁹¹ e.g. Kelly's Post Office Directories for London, and a range of others available for many districts published by a range of provincial publishers. [Bibliography, section e.]

class habit of renting property rather than buying. Surprisingly few doctors or lawyers are at the same address ten years later. Slightly more can still be found there five years later, but many had moved in the years between 1861, 1866, and 1871.

Business people, on the other hand stayed put, because of the nature of their work, and the need to build up a reputation in a district. Women from the families of trades people who signed the suffrage petition in London were often living at the same address for both censuses. This stability allows a little more insight into the family history, as wife of coffee house keeper becomes widow and coffee house proprietor herself, for example. There is also a problem when tracing working class women who signed. In Leeds, for example, a whole street of working class addresses yielded not one where the women was already in residence in 1861 or still in residence in 1871. This could represent fraud on the part of the canvassers, Mrs Heaton, the local doctor's wife, and her sister in law Miss Ellen Heaton. However, a contemporary description of the latter, as a strong, open character make this seem unlikely.⁹²

Trades directories provided postal addresses for middle class dwellings, and classified lists of trades people, by address as well as trade, again for the use of the middle class consumer. One consumable for the middle class was education, and the many girls schools proprietors who feature in the suffrage and Kensington Society lists can be found in the directories. Occasionally their full page or half page advertisements can be very informative. Another feature of the directories and the census was that the entries identified the 'head of household'. By this means it is possible to discover which women in the sample were heads of households, either as widows or independent single women.

Was it possible to discover the social makeup of this large group, and in their background and upbringing? To a certain extent, biographies and memoirs were helpful, notably the privately published memoirs of Eliza Ellis, whose sister Margaret wrote a memoir of her for the family, and Matilda Adriana Chaplin, who wrote her memories of childhood for her grandchildren.⁹³ This material made up for its rarity by its quality and detail. For a family audience, the writers told of domestic detail, childhood experiences, attitudes to parents, and their experience of the economic uncertainty of Victorian middle class life.

It has been possible to analyse the following aspects of background and experience in some detail: age, marital status, geographical location, occupation of a male family member, own occupation, and whether they were a householder. In a

⁹²Brian and Dorothy Payne. 'Extracts from Dr Heaton's Diaries.' Thoresby Society Publications 1971, vol. LIII, Part 2 No. 117

⁹³Maria Adriana Chaplin. Memoir of Mrs M.A. Chaplin written by herself and edited by Holroyd Chaplin. London, Privately printed, 1899., Margaret Ellis. Letters and memories of Eliza Ellis. Leicester, Privately printed, 1883.

smaller number of cases information on religious and political allegiances was found. The pattern of membership of a range of organisations was charted. Little information on relationships with parents, and the women's own experiences of marriage and parenthood was discovered so it was not possible to undertake the same analysis that Banks⁹⁴ did with her elite group. This constraint meant that those aspects of the sample's lives are covered in Chapter Five, Section 1, which draws on the accounts of the lives of the few more obscure women whose lives have been ignored by historians.⁹⁵ These accounts were illuminating, and have to represent the life patterns of the majority of the women in the sample, in this aspect of their lives.

Finally, the connections between the women developed, of course, and occurred over time, and the representation of such networks of friendship and support are complex, as are the networks themselves. The use of spot studies, of families or localities, has been adopted here, demonstrating the connections drawn on for specific campaigns, and relationships.

⁹⁴Olive Banks. Becoming a feminist.

⁹⁵e.g. Anna M. Stoddart. Elizabeth Pease Nichol. (Saintly Lives) London, R.F. Horton. Robert Forman, J.M. Dent and Co., 1899., Anna M. Stoddart. Life and letters of Hannah E. Pipe London and Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1908.

Chapter Two. The Context for Change, 1840-1865

Before looking at the individual lives of the women who signed the suffrage petition and belonged to the Kensington Society in 1866, it is important to explore the context within which they had grown up, and in which they lived much of their adult lives. The changes taking place during their lives could be crudely characterised as institutional, or event based occurrences, social change and alterations brought about by technological innovation in consequence of the industrial revolution. The impact of these changes was as much through perception of their providing a source of danger, as of new freedom. The changes could open up a gap between parents and children, or could bring them closer together through shared endeavour. Insurance against the effects of change, and helplessness against its hazards became a common preoccupation. The possibility of influencing and changing society, either from below or above by some form of co-operative or paternalistic action was tested again and again during these two decades, by people of every class. Such individuals and groups were concerned to change the fate of the nation, the world, other people or themselves as individuals.

1. Technological Change.

Women have benefited even more than men by the general progress of the times, the facilitation of travelling (formerly impossible to them with out protection), the opening of good lending libraries, cheap books and postage. The dead sea of ennui in which so many of them have lived is now rippled by a hundred currents from all quarters of heaven¹

As Frances Power Cobbe, (writing in 1862) indicated, technological change actually gave women access to information about all the other changes which were taking place, and technological change enabled many of the changes to be on a larger scale than would have been possible without them. Women were also embedded in the early manifestations of these changes, as post mistresses or authors, readers or writers of letters, purchasers, sellers or printers of periodical literature. Space was set aside for them in railway trains and at stations. Many wrote and read books or articles, and distributed tracts and pamphlets across class boundaries². Even if they only read

¹ Frances Power Cobbe 'What shall we do with our old maids?' in Candida Ann Lacey, ed. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. New York and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987 pp 354-378. [Frances Power Cobbe is here expressing her own strongly felt belief in progress. However the practical agents of such progress which she selects are significant.]

² For the place of writing and publishing among radical Unitarian 'feminists', for example, see Kathryn Gleadle, The Early Feminists, Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement 1831-1851. London, Macmillan, 1995.

newspapers (which were produced by new steam printing techniques) as they used them to line drawers or wrap china, the printed word was difficult to avoid, and the gap between literacy and illiteracy, education and ignorance must have been harder and harder to ignore. These technological changes were clearly not more important than great movements like Anti-Slavery or Chartism, or the social changes which the middle classes were experiencing at this period. However they made an essential, and often neglected contribution to these shifts and movements. They also had, as Cobbe suggested, a particular impact on women by offering them either vicarious or real access to these shifts and movements, and the opportunity to contribute to them.

During this period the railway network was established. This made it easier for family and friendship to be maintained by meeting for events such as weddings. Recreational travel became easier for the middle classes, and resorts such as the hydropathic spa at Ben Rhydding³ were established. Families would return regularly, allowing new friendships between people of similar class from different localities to develop in the relaxed holiday atmosphere. Women could be left in a resort while their husbands or fathers commuted to work, returning at the weekends. Commuting became a more common experience for the middle class man, as did living in the suburbs for his wife and daughters. The removal of the home from the workplace allowed by improved transport led to a change in the nature of the middle class home. More spacious houses and gardens became the focus for expenditure⁴. At the same time women, separated from their extended family, could become more isolated. Women who could in the past have been involved in their husband's business, might no longer be on the spot, and lacked the necessary experience and contacts. Mrs Pipe⁵ was able to carry on her husband's cutlery business in Manchester on his death. However the family had recently moved out to the suburbs, and this involved her in a walk of three miles each morning to the shop. Having lived 'over the shop' for most of her marriage, this transition was possible. Her aim was to use her new house as a school, and she worked to pay for her daughter's education.

Family travel became affordable for many⁶. It was also possible for the less well to do to contemplate long journeys. Wives of some imprisoned Chartists, for

³For the place of Ben Rhydding in the life of middle class families, see Margaret Ellis, Letters and Memoirs of Eliza Ellis Leicester, Privately Printed, 1883, and Anna M. Stoddart, Elizabeth Pease Nichol. London, R.F.Horton, Robert Forman, J.M.Dent and Co., 1899.

⁴see Catherine Hall, 'Butcher, baker and candlestick maker,' in E Whitlegge et al., The changing experience of women. Milton Keynes, Open University Press 1988, and Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes. Men and women of the English middle class, 1780-1850. London, Hutchinson, 1987.

⁵Anna M. Stoddart, Life and letters of Hannah E Pipe London and Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1908.

⁶For an analysis of the impact of the railways see J.R Kelleet 'the Railways as an Agent of internal Change in Victorian Cities,' in R.J.Morris and Richard Rodger, The Victorian City, a Reader in British Urban History, 1820-1914. London, Longman, 1993, pp. 181-208.

example, were helped to visit their husbands in jail. Efforts were made to make the Great Exhibition accessible to working people at Crystal Palace, with special trains. With the railways came the culture of the railway. Classified compartments could permit some conversation with strangers, or at least allow middle class women to observe others in interaction with each other. The station bookstall gave access to a range of literature, which included at one time the feminist English Woman's Journal. Jessie Boucherett, who became an untiring activist promoting employment and suffrage for women, went to Langham Place to offer her services after buying a copy on a railway station. As the railways sliced their path through existing towns, the interior lives of all classes could be observed through train windows, and extremes of poverty and wealth viewed in telling juxtaposition. The trains themselves, with their class and price differentiation made obvious by starkly different levels of comfort, could be seen as a microcosm of society.

The ease of travel, by faster boats as well as trains made it possible to distribute newspapers, books and letters with previously unimagined speed. Letters could be exchanged as many as three times a day over short distances. A correspondence such as that between Helen Taylor and her mother when she was on the stage in the provinces could still have only a day or two's delay between posting and receipt. (This was so even though this was a correspondence which involved letters being directed via John Stuart Mill's office in the city, and various poste restante addresses in provincial towns to maintain secrecy)

The speed of travel between towns made the large scale or nation wide organisations possible. Large meetings could be called, as they were for the Anti Corn Laws and Chartist campaigns. Lecturers, for example the African American anti-slavery lecturer Sarah Parker Remond,⁷ could travel countrywide. Organisations as different as the Anti-Slavery Societies, the Society of Friends and NAPSS could hold regular annual and quarterly meetings in many different towns and cities. By this means they could broaden local support as well as building a nation-wide network. NAPSS annual meetings often attracted as many as 2,000 men and women, a large proportion of whom would be drawn from that year's host city, but many from London, Edinburgh, Dublin, and other places.⁸

⁷ Miss Sarah Parker Remond 1826-?1887. Daughter of freed slaves, brought up in New York. Took theatre to court for ejecting her from the audience. Attended Seneca Falls Convention. Came to Britain to lecture on Anti-Slavery platforms. Stayed with Mrs Reid and attended Bedford College. Lived with Mr and Mrs P.A. Taylor. In 1866 went to Florence to train as a physician, and practised there until her death. See J.B.Lowenburt and R. Bogin. eds. Black Women in Nineteenth Century Life: Their Words, Their Thoughts, Their Feelings. London, Pennsylvania University Press, 1976, pp. 222-233.

⁸ NAPSS Transactions, London, NAPSS, 1857-1886. For an analysis of the place of the NAPSS see also Lawrence Goldman. 'The Social Science Association 1857-86, a context for Mid-Victorian Liberalism.' English Historical Review January 1986, 95-134. and Kathleen E McCrone. 'The

Literature, in the form of books, periodicals, pamphlets, tracts and newspapers, became readily available. Libraries and reading rooms allowed it to be shared, and far more people read most material than the original purchaser.⁹ There was an explosion of publishing, swollen by the unstamped illegal papers before 1836, and later helped by the repeal of the taxes on newspapers. Developments in education included a broadened syllabus and developing sciences in the universities, working men's classes and schools for working class children. Libraries were set up by middle class philanthropists or by groups of autodidacts. Women, as well as men, would share books and discuss them. It was possible to become a publisher fairly easily, though it appears not to have been usual to make a comfortable living at it. The English Woman's Journal is an example of a periodical set up by amateurs. The distribution of literature, for example the unstamped press, or religious tracts, was often in the hands of women. When philanthropic women founded schools, as did the Ellis sisters in Leicester, the provision of a library or reading room was a priority. Even if middle class women did not go to school and were confined to the home, the expansion of publishing could mean that their father or brothers might have a good library, (to which they possibly had access.) Women like Barbara Bodichon and her friend Bessie Rayner Parkes exchanged books and critiques of their reading, and their correspondence is dominated by these discussions. However access to literature could vary dramatically according to class and individual circumstances, and most homes might have few books. The library which the Quaker Ellis sisters set up in Leicestershire for the young working women of their village¹⁰ contrasts with some philanthropic libraries which were exclusively for men.¹¹ Library subscription costs and the price of postage meant that only well-to-do middle class families could afford newly published material.

The arrival of the penny post, and the efficient delivery of letters was a significant development after 1840. It not only facilitated friendship for women who were not able to travel frequently, but was also used over quite short distances, much as the telephone is used today.¹² The reasonable cost allowed women to exchange books as well as letters. Middle class families were able to take out regular

National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, and the Advancement of Victorian Women.' Atlantis (Canada), 8, 1982. 44-66.

⁹For evidence of the availability of literature to even the working class, see David Vincent. Bread Knowledge and Freedom, a study of Nineteenth Century Working Class Autobiography London, Europa, 1981. and John Burnett, ed. Destiny Obscure, Autobiographies of Childhood, Education and Family from the 1820s to the 1920s. London, Allen Lane, 1982.

¹⁰Margaret Ellis. Letters and Memoirs of Eliza Ellis. Leicester, Privately Printed, 1883.

¹¹For a discussion of the debates around access for women to libraries and other facilities in the Whittington Clubs, see: Kathryn Gleadle. The Early Feminists. pp. 140-170.

¹² An example of this is the correspondence between Helen Taylor and Harriet Taylor Mill, during Helen Taylor's brief experience as an actress. London School of Economics, Mill Taylor Papers, Vol. LI.

subscriptions to periodicals, and to order books from booksellers.¹³ A society like the Kensington Society was available to women who could not physically attend its meetings. Corresponding members submitted short papers, and received the papers of their fellow members by post. Petitions and pamphlets could be circulated and collected by post. As well as personal correspondence, it was possible to send and receive unsolicited mail. Emily Davies used Crockford's Clerical Directory¹⁴ as a source of addresses to which she could send copies of the Memorial for opening the University Local Examinations to girls. She received a good response to this mailing, even though she was personally unknown to many recipients. Post office guides and professional directories could also be used to pinpoint potential supporters of a charity or campaign. One use to which the printed 1866 Suffrage Petition was subsequently put was as a reference list. Women who had signed were asked to collect signatures themselves for later petitions.

Thus practical innovations, and the expansion of media of communication and transport gave campaigners, and people in general an enlarged view of the world, which it was difficult to avoid. Women in particular, whatever censorship might be imposed on their reading, could not but be aware that more information and opinion, from a range of points of view was available. A movement such as Anti-Slavery could not be ignored, since information about it might come from newspapers, periodicals, tracts given out at church, petitions brought to the door by respectable women, a novel like *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, children's books, lectures given by women or men who arrived by train. Posters urged boycotts of slave grown produce in the shops, crowds would travel by rail to lectures and large conferences. It would be nearly impossible (though still sometimes attempted) to exclude debate on such an issue from the home, whether the family agreed or disagreed with the campaigners or among themselves. Literacy, publishing in all its forms, and improved transport contributed to the social changes of the decades between 1840 and 1870, and particularly to the mass campaigns and organisational pressure groups that came into being during that period.

¹³See M. Jeanne Peterson. Family, Love and Work in the Lives of Victorian Gentlewomen Bloomington, Indiana, Indiana University Press, 1989 especially pp 41-45

¹⁴Crockford's Clerical Directory. London, Crockford, 1864

2. Social Change.

Davidoff and Hall have skilfully traced the changes that had taken place up to 1850 within the English middle classes. The group investigated here had lived through the changes they described as children and young adults. A further decade and a half continued such changes, sometimes enhancing, sometimes abandoning them. Many of the women considered in this study came from the backgrounds that Family Fortunes¹⁵ described in such detail.

One statistic of social change which was of great importance was the significant number of single women which was revealed by the 1841 and 1851 Censuses. This was to increase later. The fact of imbalance and the perception of the effects of this imbalance were equally significant. Fears about the fate of these 'redundant women' became a major concern of the middle classes¹⁶. The education of young women for marriageability, the employment of less fortunate young women to provide such education, the plight of the unemployed woman and the type of work which was suitable, all commanded attention. Their plight inspired initiatives among both men and women. Later marriage, higher expectations of the material circumstances required for middle class marriage, and the drain of young men to the colonies made the opportunities for marriage itself less likely. These factors fuelled a lively debate, which continued throughout the latter half of the century, about 'old maids' and the proper means of preparing young women for an uncertain future.

Middle class professions at this period required lengthy training or apprenticeship and some skills could no longer be simply passed down to children by informal apprenticeship. The death of the breadwinner could leave a family destitute before the introduction of life insurance. The education of the sons of professional fathers became an urgent priority, since these boys could not learn their parent's job at his side, as had been possible in the past. A higher level of education became essential to begin a professional career. The need to invest as much as possible in the education of boys threw the treatment of the girls of a family into sharp relief. They, after all, could still acquire domestic skills in the home alongside the mother. Death could force a family into almost immediate self-reliance. A professional father might be on a salary, or dependent on fees for services rendered. His family, who might live in a rented house, and who were paying for education, and employing a servant, and probably not growing much of their own food, would need cash at once to maintain

¹⁵Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. Family Fortunes. See also, e.g., M. Jeanne Peterson, Family, Love and Work.

¹⁶For examples of contemporary debate, see Janet Horowitz Murray. Strong Minded Women and Other lost voices from Nineteenth Century England. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1981. pp. 48-61.

the status quo. It is not surprising that a women like Matilda Chaplin, whose father had died in India, leaving her mother with four children under six, chose, (though widowed herself), to send her daughter to Queen's College, and support her training as a doctor in the early 1870's. She knew from personal experience the helplessness and dependence into which a woman might fall.¹⁷

Social mobility could result from the success of the individual entrepreneur or from the investment in a professional education for a son. These factors could result in a rise in status. It was equally possible to fall in the social scale, and this was often the case for women when a male family member died. Middle class families could use the home as a symbol of their status, using artefacts, books, furniture, paintings, musical instruments, or accomplishment in entertaining, music, the arts, dress, to demonstrate the place that they had achieved.¹⁸ Temporary problems could be disguised behind a facade of cultured and polite home life. Success could be signalled by a bout of conspicuous consumption. The increase in the purely decorative domestic arts was accompanied by an increase in the amount of such work done in the home as leisure activity by middle class women. The divisions between crafts-people and amateurs could seem arbitrary, and as skilled people closed their workshops to women, many women discovered skills which they used in the home could not be transferred to the market place. One of the problems encountered when researching the middle class women in this study was their physical mobility. Whereas the families of trades people in the City of London would appear in both the 1861 and 1871 census, it was easier to trace the families of professional men through annual street directories. Moving house, and renting, made it possible to adjust the style of a family's living to current circumstances. Leonore Davidoff¹⁹ showed how this also operated for the upper classes, suggesting that sometimes travel to Europe was used as a device to disguise temporary financial problems, and to allow retrenchment. Moving house could then become yet another aspect of accentuating social position, and this mobility of the professional classes made necessary such devices as the Post Office Directories²⁰ which could keep clients aware of changes which had occurred.

With the legislation of 1828-9 which affected Nonconformists and Roman Catholics in turn, a new group of people had access to political power. By the 1840's and 1850's, Quakers, Unitarians, Jews, manufacturers and professionals were testing out their actual power, and seeking new methods of putting forward their point of

¹⁷Matilda Adriana Chaplin. Memoir of Mrs M.A.Chaplin written by herself and edited by Holroyd Chaplin. London, Privately printed, 1899.

¹⁸For a general view, see F.M.L.Thompson. The Rise of Respectable Society, a Social History of Victorian Britain, 1830-1900. London, Fontana, 1988. For the particular role of women artists, see: Pamela Gerrish Nunn. Victorian Women Artists. London, Women's Press, 1987.

¹⁹ Leonore Davidoff. The Best circles. Society, etiquette and the Season London, Croom Helm 1973

²⁰For a list of some of the street directories consulted, see Bibliography, Section e.

view. Anti-Slavery, Anti Corn Laws, new colleges like Owen's College in Manchester, the Law Amendment Society, and the 'alternative parliament' of the NAPSS, were all manifestations of this group testing their power to challenge or change established institutions. The possibility of opening Parliament to a wider electorate, or of making far more radical changes in the political and social structure of Britain became more realisable. By 1860 it became clear that the franchise in Britain would have to be widened. As more men seemed likely to obtain the vote, the fact that women who were householders (and who paid rates and taxes) would not do so became more apparently unfair. While their husbands and sons voted, theirs was not such a problem, but with the likelihood of a large number of uneducated and socially inferior men deciding their political fate, women's situation was thrown into sharper relief.

3. Women's Involvement in Campaigns, 1840-1866.

The opening of Queen's College London, and Bedford College, both for young women, came in 1848 and 1849 respectively. By 1866 girls had equal access to Cambridge University Local Examinations, and women's education was being considered by the Taunton Commission. Broader social and legal problems were discussed by the Law Amendment Society, and the NAPSS. They in their turn promoted practical enterprises and attempts to change the law. These included the first Married Women's Property petition, support for the English Woman's Journal, the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, a female emigration society and the all-woman Victoria Press.

There is a little evidence of support for Chartism, and some also for the middle class pressure group, the Anti Corn Law campaign, among the families of the women studied. However the women themselves seem to have been far more likely to have been personally involved in the Anti-Slavery campaigns. Clare Midgley's account of women's activities²¹ demonstrates their range and autonomy in the face of some hostility and much infighting. Women collected thousands of signatures for petitions, organised boycotts of shops selling slave produced goods, and organised massive sales of work to raise funds. They ran independent female societies, which were often at odds with the predominantly male groups. They took up a particularly female stance in regard to the issues, drawing attention to the plight of female slaves and speaking of sisterly solidarity. For both men and women, both institutionally and theoretically, the

²¹ Clare Midgley. Women against slavery.

situation of slave and owner was often compared with that of women and men, and parallels were sometimes drawn. It might seem simplistic to trace the origins of British feminism to the events at the 1840 World Anti Slavery Convention but certainly the events of that June morning when women delegates were excluded affected the individual women involved in profound ways. Midgley suggests that:

In a dramatic public way it introduced into the British arena a crucial point of dissension between supporters and opponents of William Lloyd Garrison in the United States: the right of women abolitionists to fully participate in mixed assemblies as office holders, public lecturers and delegates. For the first time the 'woman question' was openly discussed by men in a British Anti-Slavery forum, and for the first time many British women abolitionists began to consider the issues involved.²²

The 1840 Convention enabled women to meet. It introduced American activists like Lucretia Mott to women campaigners in Britain, (and incidentally to each other). The debate about women delegates opened up discussion of the way in which women were treated. The exclusion crystallised the ideas of the female American delegates, leading directly to the Seneca Falls convention. Contacts between American and British abolitionists were maintained for many years. The Anti slavery campaigners wished to demonstrate the scale of the abhorrence of slavery, and used the women in their families as canvassers, and secretaries. Slavery was quintessentially a moral issue, and therefore the whole family could be involved. Economic and material considerations could be contrasted with right conduct. A moral wrong could be countered by the withdrawal of economic support using sugar boycotts. The family abstaining from slave grown products was self denying and virtuous.

Chartism was ambivalent, on the whole, about the need for women to have political power, but, as Dorothy Thompson²³ and Jutta Schwarzkopf²⁴ have shown, a substantial number of working class women were involved in the movement. Some supporters were canvassed by women collecting signatures for the 1866 suffrage petition. These included Elizabeth Pease Nichol, Mrs Mary Lovett, and the 'Female Chartist of Ipswich' (see Chapter four). However many active Chartist men like Jacob Holyoake and William Lovett made and maintained contact with their middle class supporters, through publishing and educational enterprises they went on to found. Anne Knight, who advocated women's suffrage in Sheffield died in 1862.

²²ibid. page 158

²³Dorothy Thompson. *The Chartists*. London, Temple Smith, 1984.

²⁴ Jutta Schwarzkopf. *Women in the Chartist Movement*. London, Macmillan, 1991.

Philosophic Radicals, Radical Unitarians²⁵ and Owenite socialists were only three of many groups debating political change in these years. Followers of Robert Owen attempted to live out their beliefs in model communities, as well as founding co-operative enterprises. Barbara Taylor gives a vivid account of women Owenites in Eye and the new Jerusalem.²⁶ The movement was controversial throughout, and concluded its life in a mire of debt and failure. The ideas of Robert Owen, rather than the practical applications of those ideas, did have some currency generally. In the area of education, his school at New Lanark was taken as a model by Barbara Bodichon when she set up her own school. Her tutor as a child had been a teacher at New Lanark. Families like the Barmbys, who had set up an independent Owenite community for a while (and were also involved in Chartism), embraced the idea of the equality of women, and continued to support the suffrage campaigns after 1866.

The Philosophic Radicals, the circle of philosophers and economists around James Mill and George Grote, debated the perfectibility of society. Their intellectual group included a number of women there by virtue of relationship, but allowed some respect because of their strength of character and intellect. Harriet Grote 'had she been a man' was said to have been a potential leader of the group. James Mill's son John Stuart Mill treated the intellect and ideas of Harriet Taylor with near adulation²⁷.

Well to do families employed live-in or daily governesses and tutors for their younger children and adolescent daughters. As the necessity for a good education, rather than a more traditional apprenticeship to the family business, became apparent, decisions about how to spend money most effectively to this end became a concern of middle class fathers. Women, of course, could still learn their domestic skills at home with their mothers, but some education was required to enhance their attraction as wives. Middle class fathers found that their position as employers of other middle class people within the home raised as many issues as did the 'servant question'. These centred around the quality of education and middle class behaviour that these employees could provide. A parallel concern to fathers was that governessing, or running a domestic private school, might be the only prospect for earning a living that their own orphaned daughters or widows might have open to them.

The expansion of colleges and schools²⁸ offered increased employment opportunities for well educated middle class men. At Queen's College London, and

²⁵Kathryn Gleadle. The Early Feminists.

²⁶Barbara Taylor. Eye and the new Jerusalem. Socialism and feminism in the nineteenth century. London, Virago, 1983.

²⁷John Stuart Mill. Autobiography. O.U.P. 1924 [1873] pp. 156-60

²⁸Bedford College. Register, Joan M. Burstyn. Victorian Education and the Ideal of Womanhood. London, Croom Helm, 1980., Mary Rosalie Glynn Grylls. Queen's College, 1848-1948. London, George Routledge, 1948. Josephine Kamm. How Different from Us. A biography of Miss Buss and

Bedford College, founded in 1848 and 1849 to train governesses, the lecturers were all men at first. The fees for lectures for women or at such a college could be a valuable extra source of income for academics wishing to live outside the bachelor world of Oxford and Cambridge. The home tutoring market offered part time work for professional musicians, actors and dancers, and artists. Women, too, could supplement their income from performing by giving private lessons. Fanny Stirling, a successful actress, gave lessons to Helen Taylor in the early 1850's. She and Helen became firm friends, though Fanny remained very deferential towards Helen's mother, Harriet Taylor Mill, who paid for the lessons.²⁹

One aspect of the education of middle class girls, was that through it they got to know middle class women who were working for a living. Governesses and teachers moved frequently. They could remain in touch as mentors after they had moved on. Two governesses who worked for John Bright's family were later involved in supporting campaigns, and urging their home bound friends to take an interest in feminist issues. The founders of Bedford College continued to encourage favourite ex-pupils for many years after they left. This acquaintance with working middle class women could also work in a negative way, leading to contempt, and fear of becoming a dependent in the households of others. Going away to school or college might be an adolescent girl's only opportunity to make friends of her own age. Such socialising was usually very carefully supervised, but it is clear that ex students of Queen's College and Bedford College kept in touch, even when their paths through life were very different. On the whole, available educational opportunities for men offered expanded horizons, and a more competitive edge to life. For women, they offered a more limited scope, a starker set of options, and less control over outcomes.

The opening of Queen's College, London in 1848³⁰ marked the beginning of a phase of improved education for girls, particularly aimed at those who were going to become governesses. In the same year a governesses school was founded at Bolham, near Tiverton in Devon, and a girls' grammar school in Loughborough. The next year saw the foundation of Bedford College by Elizabeth Reid, her sister, and friends. These colleges were offering a higher level of education than had previously been available, and they were vocationally focused, rather than concentrating upon accomplishments, (though the vocation was to teach those accomplishments!) The

Miss Beale. London, Bodley Head, 1958. North London Collegiate School. The North London Collegiate School. 1850-1950. A hundred years of girls' education. Oxford, Oxford University Press. 1950., Queen's College Archive. Miscellaneous papers. Ruth Young. The life of an educational worker, Henrietta Busk. London, Green and Co., 1934.

²⁹Mill/Taylor Papers, especially Vol. LIV.

³⁰Mary Rosalie Glynn Grylls. Queen's College, 1848-1948. London, George Routledge, 1948. Elaine Kaye. History of Queen's College London. London, Queen's College, 1972., Margaret Tuke. A History of Bedford College for Women, 1849-1937. London, Oxford University Press 1939.

two London colleges catered for both full time and part time students. As well as women who were to be governesses, they enrolled students who wanted to improve their general education. In both colleges, the teaching was done by men. The colleges also had volunteer Lady Visitors who supervised and chaperoned the students. Bedford College had a mixed governing body. The composition of the committee, staff and students of Bedford College in its earlier years shows that students were often related to committee members in a way that was not necessarily true of the composition of the more usual private girls school. In those there was no evidence that relatives were pupils, though they were quite often involved as teachers or administrators. In fact the girl's school often seems to have been in a distant place. (e.g. the Garrett sisters from Suffolk and the Crow sisters from Darlington were sent to Miss Browning's school in Blackheath, Frances Power Cobbe was sent to school in Brighton from Ireland.) Some schools specialised in taking girls from colonial families. Bedford College had no women teachers at this early stage, but there were women on the committee, women founders, women Lady Visitors, and in nearly all these cases, either they themselves or their younger relatives took courses at the college. There was a boarding house, and the Lady Resident, Miss Thomas, ran this as a private business. The experience of boarding and studying together proved a bonding experience as can be seen in the correspondence of Annette Akroyd and Ellen Nichols. In the early years of the college, there may have been financial pressures which encouraged the founders and committee to recruit friends and relatives as part-time (or non-compounding) students. On the other hand, it is far more likely that the facilities were desperately needed by these young and middle-aged women, who were eager to take advantage of them. Another aspect of the ethos of the college was the warm personal interest which Mrs Reid and Miss Bostock took in the recruitment of students, particularly those who might be in financial hardship. This identification of need was discovered through past students. Both Annette Akroyd and Ellen Nichols were canvassed for suggestions of deserving young women in their locality who could be offered assisted places. Perhaps the non-compounders were deliberately there to subsidise the governess training function. At all times there seems to have been an openness, and a real eagerness to identify and nurture intellectual growth in the young women. Thus connections were used in an inclusive rather than an exclusive way, as a route to finding more like-minded women, regardless of financial circumstances.

Young women usually attended these two colleges for two or three years in their late teens. The colleges gained a good reputation, and schools employing teachers trained there would boast of their qualifications, and model their own programmes of study on their example. By 1866 many teachers trained at Bedford College and Queen's College, London were already running successful schools

themselves, and in their turn were employing graduating students on their staff. In the early 1860's Emily Davies had started to campaign to open higher education to women. Her first attempt, which was successful, was to open the Cambridge University Local Examinations to girls. She gathered support from 999 men and women, both teachers and people of influence. When the Schools Inquiry Commission was instigated in 1864 to investigate the schooling of middle class boys, it was persuaded to consider girls' education too, and it took evidence from women.

The Law Amendment Society was founded by a group of Radical lawyers to address the question of outdated and unfair laws. Members of the society encouraged Barbara Leigh Smith in her plan to write a summary of laws which most affected women. Her pamphlet A Brief summary in plain language of the most important laws of England concerning women³¹, published in 1854, was well received. This encouraged her in the hope that a petition to Parliament could bring about changes to the law concerning the property of married women. In December 1855, with a group of women which included the writer and magazine publisher Mary Howitt, the art historian Anna Jameson, and Barbara Leigh Smith's contemporaries and close friends Bessie Parkes and Eliza Bridell Fox, the collection of signatures was begun. The committee they formed employed Maria Rye, (later active in the organisation of female emigration) as secretary. More than 24,000 signatures were collected on more than 70 petitions throughout the country. Mary Howitt described her visit to her wealthy neighbour Angela Burdett Coutts to canvass her support:

We then talked of this proposed movement to secure to married women their own property and earnings. They both [Miss Coutts and Mrs Brown her companion] agree that it is quite right...but as to supporting the petition, she must fully consider it and can say nothing at present.³²

Miss Coutts did not sign, but a number of influential women did.³³ In May 1856 a public meeting was held in support of the petition under the aegis of the Law Amendment Society. Many of the Women's Committee attended, but none spoke. Only a year later, Lord Brougham and George Hastings, both members of the Law

³¹Barbara Leigh Smith 'A Brief summary, in plain language, of the most important laws concerning women: together with a few observations thereon.' (1854) in Candida Ann Lacey, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group. New York and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987.

³²Mary Howitt. Mary Howitt, an autobiography. ed. Margaret Howitt. 2 vols., London, Isbister and Co., 1889.

³³ Lee Holcombe Wives and property: reform of the Married Women's Property law in nineteenth century England. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983. p 238 for heading list of names.

Amendment Society, founded the NAPSS.³⁴ This society was to be notable for the encouragement which it gave to women, both as contributors to and audience for debate. A woman writing in the English Woman's Journal in 1858 recalled the first annual Meeting of the NAPSS in Birmingham:

Everyone present at that meeting was struck by the universal enthusiasm manifested in its favour. The force of a new idea was apparently animating the entire proceedings, so that formerly despised truisms...were received with the fervour of freshly discovered truths. The new Association was felt to be the expression of the highest want of the age, the want of united effort in social advancement, while the more sanguine saw in it a means whereby that want might be supplied. The various streams and driblets of improvement were to flow into one channel, and with force augmented and volume increased by each accession, to swell into a tide which should sweep away every impediment, and renovate the face of society. The possibilities of such a society seemed incalculable, yet it was not the work of visionaries. Poetry and practicality seemed for once united....The Association has assumed the right of women to sit in an assembly deliberating on social affairs- nay to express her opinion in that assembly if she chooses .. more than one woman took part by contributing papers³⁵

In September 1859 Bessie Rayner Parkes wrote to Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon

I sent you a Bradford [meeting] prospectus. Now Isa Craig says Miss Boucherett means to write and read a paper, and Isa wants me to do so. Now shall you and I prepare a joint paper based on sound *political economy*, and I will read it, or cause it to be read as a joint production. I wish you were going to stay over the Bradford Parliament; there can be nothing in America [Barbara was going to America on her honeymoon journey] half so striking as this convention of the most weighty men and women in England. We ought to be *eternally grateful to George Hastings who did it for us*. You see it is a Convention in which women are called to consider the affairs of their country, a great deal more dignified position than a convention to aid their own rights, however true or important. It actually concedes en petit the whole principle of the suffrage. And whatever the Association for Social Science promulgates, is certain to become the law of the land in five years.³⁶

After the meeting, in October 1859, Bessie Parkes described the part played by women to Barbara Bodichon:

³⁴ NAPSS Transactions. . Lawrence Goldman. 'The Social Science Association 1857-86, a context for Mid-Victorian Liberalism.' and Kathleen E McCrone. 'The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, and the Advancement of Victorian Women.'

³⁵English Woman's Journal. November 1858

³⁶Girton College , Bessie Rayner Parkes Papers V 90/1 Deal. September 13/59

I read our paper to a crowded section, 200 people listening at the very least. Mrs Jameson and Miss Twining on the platform beside me. Section B of the Social Economy was occupied all day with female interests and Lord Brougham came and sat with us for ten minutes, so did Isa [Craig]- we ladies staid on the platform all day among the gentlemen- Did you ever hear of such a thing! . Miss Twining also read a paper, and Mrs Jameson spoke once for two or three minutes on education. It really was an extraordinary scene, and equivalent to women in Parliament, and a great deal more impressive than anything I heard of in America because of the social weight of the male part of the hearers and speakers ..People all told me I read excellently and I tell you, not from conceit but because I know it will please you. In the morning I had read it all over to the bedpost!³⁷

She had spoken on ' The market for educated female labour'. However in spite of her 'modest and dignified delivery' several years passed before many women took up the opportunity to deliver their own papers. By 1861 only twenty-one women had presented papers in a range of sections. By that date not only Bessie Parkes, but also Emily Faithfull had read their own papers and had also delivered papers for their friends Jane Crow, Jessie Boucherett and Maria Rye. As late as 1866, Barbara Bodichon had her influential paper on female suffrage read for her by a man.

Emily Davies recalled some of the terror which she felt on the first occasion when she stood up to speak (and incidentally conveyed something of the influence and example offered by Quaker women) In October 1866, she was delivering a report

When the time came, people crowded in. We had to move into a larger room, and when I came to make my *statement, sitting at a table, a Quaker stood up* and said that in her Society people stood up to speak, and could be better heard, so I had to address the meeting in the usual way:³⁸

The Meeting of October 1866 was clearly a watershed, and the debate about whether to deliver papers was also raised by Elizabeth Garrett in September of that year

For several reasons I incline to doing it myself, but I shall not do it if you think it unwise. My reasons are 1st. that it is a pity to let the women's element in the Assn expire from want of people who will use the liberty offered them 2nd. that reading papers is the first step towards being allowed to join in discussions. 3rd. that the paper would be more attended to if I read it myself. 4th that I have a tolerably strong voice and am neither hideous, young, nor beautiful If you think the reasons sufficient, I will practice reading aloud. ³⁹

³⁷ *ibid.* V 92/1 October 19th 1859

³⁸ Girton College, Emily Davies Papers. Family Chronicle p.499

³⁹ *ibid.* p. 497.

This reference to discussions is puzzling, since both Mary Carpenter and Anna Jameson were recorded as joining in discussions at Meetings before 1860. Perhaps Garrett was suggesting that someone who had delivered a paper would be recognised by the Chair during subsequent discussions. After nine years of apparent encouragement, women with experience of committee work and lobbying clearly still felt uneasy about speaking. This could be because a substantial number of women attended the meetings, but they usually seem to have come with male family members. The Meetings were on a large scale, and as many as 2,000 people attended the 1863 Edinburgh meeting. The vast majority of speakers were men, and the organisation of the sessions appeared to be in the tradition of male dominated societies. To read a paper, or even to have it read by a man, to such a large group in which men predominated, was an innovation. Women who read their paper had a responsibility not to fall into the 'confusion of tongues' expected by critics of the Association:

There is no fear of English women flinging themselves recklessly into the arena of public speaking..[argued an unnamed writer in the English Woman's Journal]. There is no fear of a woman who has gained the right to be heard on any social question speaking out in a public assembly except on the rare occasions when womanly tact will advise her of the wisdom or duty of such a course ⁴⁰

The papers delivered by women were published in the English Woman's Journal, proceedings were discussed in the press, and reports of meetings were issued. By these means they reached a wider audience, than merely the members of the Association, who were representative of the most active reformers in a range of fields. The caution of the women about speaking in public was probably wise, bearing in mind the prejudices of those outside the Association who were quick to condemn 'strong minded' women ⁴¹. Women's papers delivered by men may also have gained in credibility in the eyes of the outside world, and also, perhaps, at the Meetings themselves. With minimal power, and little influence, women could ill afford to offend the sensibilities of the one group of men who had proved most likely to support them.

As well as providing a space in which social issues could be debated, The NAPSS also provided practical support for initiatives which women set up. These

⁴⁰English Woman's Journal. October 1858

⁴¹The Saturday Review in 1862 commented that 'there are decided advantages in the Universal Palaver Association. It must be remembered to Lord Brougham's credit that he is the first person who has dealt upon this plan with the problem of female loquacity...It is a great idea to tire out the hitherto unflagging vigour of their tongues by encouraging a taste of stump oratory among them...Lord Brougham's little corps of ladies, preaching strong mindedness, gives a new aspect to the association's presence...We heartily wish the strong minded ladies happiness and success in their new alliance: and do not doubt that they will remember to practice the precept of one of their debaters 'not to mind being found unladylike'. It is always better not to mind that which is inevitable" Quoted in Hester Burton Barbara Bodichon. London, John Murray, 1949.

were the Society for the Promotion of the Employment of Women, and the Female Emigration Society, both of which shared their premises and many of their personnel with the English Woman's Journal at Langham Place. For female Members of the Association it provided an important first opportunity to experience membership of a formal organisation whose purpose was debate. It offered experiences which informed the semi-formal Kensington Society. When Lavinia Solly, Mrs Heaton, Jessie Boucherett and Jane Crow joined the Kensington Society, they all had experience of delivering a paper at a NAPSS meeting. Among their fellow members were other women who had been in the audience at these Meetings.

The National Association had been characterised by the anonymous writer in the English Woman's Journal (quoted above) as 'Poetry and practicality united'. Such a description equally fitted the English Woman's Journal, itself. Founded in February 1858, its early history has been fully described by Jane Rendall.⁴² Bessie Rayner Parkes and her friend Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon had been interested in journalism, and the idea of setting up a journal for a number of years. They first purchased an existing periodical, but then set up the English Woman's Journal which was published from Langham Place. A number of women edited the journal with Bessie Parkes. These included professional journalist Isa Craig, who also was paid secretary to the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Matilda Hays, a one time actress, and Emily Davies. The English Woman's Journal set out to be both a literary and a propagandist periodical. The most serious criticism of it was the lack of quality literature. There was too heavy a dependence on material sent in by friends, as there was not enough money to pay contributors. Bessie Parkes put in a great deal of effort to boost subscriptions each year, by taking a stall at the NAPSS Meetings. However it was found that subscribers did not tend to renew the next year.

Part of the problem lay in the essentially amateur nature of the project, and the necessity of preserving it as an exclusively women's business. Other problems included personality clashes among the editorial staff and the fragmentation which occurred as a result of public response to the early issues of the journal, which concentrated on issues around women's employment. Founder editor Bessie Parkes published articles which were very positive in tone, discussing professions and trades which were suitable for women, and publicising the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women which shared its premises. This gave readers the false impression that if they went to the office of the English Woman's Journal work would be found for them. Bessie Parkes wrote, that at first they were:

⁴²Jane Rendall . ' "A Moral Engine"? Feminism, Liberalism and the English Woman's Journal. ' . Jane Rendall ed. Equal or Different , Women's politics 1800-1914 Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1987

Literally deluged with applications for employment. We had no sooner explained to ladies who came on Thursday that the formation by the Society of model classes or businesses for a select number did not imply an ability on our part to find work for indiscriminate applicants, than the same task had to be gone over again on Friday. ⁴³

The periodical influenced the women who published it as much as their readers. They were brought face to face with the scale of the problems which women encountered when they needed to find employment. In response to their discoveries, Jessie Boucherett and Adelaide Anne Procter set up the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, Emily Faithfull set up an all woman printing press, Maria Rye promoted female emigration, and a law copying business was established.

The premises at Langham Place were also used as a semi-public place where women could meet. There was a small reading room, which doubled as a meeting room. Langham Place was centrally situated in London, just north of Oxford Circus, and provided unaccompanied middle class women with a convenient haven to eat or rest. The space could also be used for larger meetings which the women themselves could control, but where men might attend and speak. For example, in 1860 a conversazione was held to report on the work of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. As well as reports, written by the Society's women executives but read by men, there were speeches (also by men) an exhibition of women's work, and tea. The hostility which such a venue might engender is shown by Bessie Parkes's discussion of an article which appeared in The Saturday Review in January 1860.

The Saturday Review wrote the most beastly attack against the Ladies' Club dirty and indecent to a horrible degree. I expect it will set all the husbands and fathers of our eighty ladies wild with anger; for this time you see, the whole body are attacked, and not me alone. It came out yesterday, and I was quite amused to see how the half dozen ladies in yesterday afternoon stormed at it. It will do us no harm because it is so outrageous and makes such disgusting classical allusions that it isn't fit for family reading. It mentions no names, but comes down on every woman who enters our doors; so I hope Mrs Jameson and Lady Goldsmid and Miss Twining and Miss Webber will feel flattered. I expect that you will hear of our party next Wednesday as being a revival of the Eleusian Mysteries. Poor Miss Sturch is coming, and Miss Bostock [Elderly founders of Bedford College] a nice couple they are for such a scandal!⁴⁴

The women involved with The English Woman's Journal and other Langham Place activities already had a range of shared experiences. Of twenty three women who

⁴³English Woman's Journal October 1860

⁴⁴ibid. V 95 1 Jan. 8/ 60

were on the editorial staff, were shareholders, or were contributors, a quarter had connections with Bedford College. Almost half had delivered papers to the Social Science Association. When Bessie Parkes made a final assessment of the impact of the English Woman's Journal in 1864 she commented:

Ten years ago, although there was an earnest and active group of people deeply interested in all that relates to female education and industry, and to reform of the laws affecting the property of married women, and though efforts were being made in many directions for the bettering of the condition of the mass of single women in this country, there was no centre of meeting, nor any one work which could be said to draw together the names of the ladies so actively employed. But the separate exertions carried on were...laying the foundations of what has now taken its place as one of the chief social movements of the day⁴⁵

By 1864 Emily Davies had come to London, and joined the editorial staff of the English Woman's Journal. She initiated a very thorough debate about the future of the periodical,⁴⁶ and herself moved in March 1863 to the Victoria Magazine which Emily Faithful printed at the Victoria Press. The agreement drawn up between Emily Davies and Emily Faithfull when the former became editor gives an impression of the problems which beset those who worked at Langham Place on the English Woman's Journal

Memoranda of agreement between Emily Faithfull, Publisher and Emily Davies, Editor of the Victoria Magazine.

That the editor read all the Mss. and conduct all the correspondence connected with the literary working of the magazine.

That the Editor is responsible for the reports of Societies, and such notices of books as may be considered desirable, except such as may be given to special reviewers

Arrangements with authors respecting payment for articles to be undertaken by the publisher

Differences of opinion respecting any article or notice of books to be discussed by the Editor, Miss Faithfull and [?]Mrs Gunning, and decided by the majority.

That a salary of £100 shall be paid to the Editor, by quarterly payments and any article contributed by the Editor to be paid for at the rate of 5/- a page.

.. That two month's notice shall be required on either side before this agreement can be terminated.

After the sixth issue of the Magazine, this engagement may be discussed and revised.⁴⁷

²⁴ English Woman's Journal. February 1864

⁴⁶ Girton College. Emily Davies Papers, p.303. Emily Davies to Barbara Bodichon December 28th 1862

⁴⁷ *ibid.* 228a March 13th 1863

The demarcation of areas of responsibility, salary, and trial period for working together were clearly not effective and, by 1864 Emily Davies wrote that things went badly. 'The business side of it had all through been very unsatisfactory, and the situation at last became intolerable, and I withdrew from it.'⁴⁸

The advent of Emily Davies, who had moved to London with her mother around 1862, resulted in campaigns and associations which appear to have been formally organised (usually by Emily Davies herself), and effectively run. She had little patience with the well meaning muddle of Langham Place. However she had already used the English Woman's Journal in her first, and most effective campaign. An article appeared in the journal in November 1862, entitled 'University Local Examinations. It gave a history of the examinations which had been initiated for boys in June 1857. The anonymous article explained that

A wish has long been felt that the manifest advantage of these examinations should be extended to girls schools, in which some test is needed, and we understand that it is now in contemplation to make a formal application on the subject to the University authorities ..To earnest and conscientious teachers we would especially commend the matter, and not less to parents of daughters by whom, assuredly, any movement having for its object the improvement of female education ought not to be regarded with indifference. Communications on the subject may be addressed to the Office of this Journal.⁴⁹

The scale of the campaign is indicated by a statement of accounts rendered in August 1864, recording expenditure on 5,450 copies of the Memorial for signature, 6,000 circulars and 2,750 lithographed letters.⁵⁰ Emily Davies commented that 'signatures to the memorial were obtained by application to schoolmistresses all over the country I had Crockford's Directory and from day to day sent out copies of the Memorial with covering letters.' The NAPSS held a special meeting to discuss the proposal Emily Davies' comments to a friend reveal the subtleties which were involved in organising a meeting where women's issues were discussed by a mixed audience, even when that audience was composed of NAPSS members:

I want to know whether any of the ladies struck you as strong minded looking. We were afraid Miss Craig wd. have ruined us by her recklessness in inviting anybody that liked to come. She insisted that they had a right to have 'mission' stamped on their brows, if they liked, but I don't think she did any serious mischief. Miss Garrett was sitting very near you, looking exactly like one of the girls whose instinct is to do just what you tell them....Miss Craig had

⁴⁸ibid Family Chronicle p.337

⁴⁹English Woman's Journal, November 1861 p.191

⁵⁰ ibid p.388

written to me in triumph that she had secured 'three lovely girls for the front row.' They were the Miss Hares. ⁵¹

This was a campaign which achieved success in a relatively short time. It had limited objectives. The examinations were in process of modification, and were in any case relatively new. Although the authorities were surprised by the campaign, it did not intrude upon deeply entrenched attitudes, or threaten long established institutions, as did the subsequent medical and higher education campaigns. It was enough for the board to question whether the 999 signatures on the petition were genuine. A printed list of names and addresses was convincing and impressive, with the great and the good, as well as the teaching and support staff of Queens College, London and Bedford College heading the list. Many hundred male and female teachers who were 'officially engaged in or connected with female education.' also signed. One of the innovative strategies of this campaign was a trial examination for girls which was held in December 1863. Supporters who were teachers included Frances Mary Buss of North London Collegiate School and Sarah Jennings, both of whom fielded successful candidates. Non-teaching friends of Emily Davies provided practical help, as well as subscriptions. Candidates up from the country had to be accommodated.

Mrs Samuel Solly became involved in the campaign as a mother. She was sister in law of Mrs Manning (formerly Charlotte Solly), President of the Kensington Society, which she also joined. She did not sign the Memorial, though her husband did. She personally contributed two guineas towards the expenses of the campaign, put her daughters in for the examinations, and wrote to Emily Davies with an assessment of their performance.

We were hardly disappointed or surprised at the result, though 'experience' in examinations (this being the first of any kind my girls have ever had) would have I doubt not made them more successful, especially with Dora who failed in things she knew perfectly, English, history etc. ⁵²

The public world was unfamiliar territory for Mrs Solly as much as it was for her daughters. Her husband signed documents on her behalf, her daughters were put forward to take up educational opportunities, she took up the acceptable middle class woman's freedom of charitable giving. She did not have the opportunity to debate the issues of the day in public. The few women (her friends and relations among them) who took up the new opportunities to speak in public at the NAPSS Meetings were women with confidence gained through practical achievements. They had edited

⁵¹ibid. p 359

⁵²ibid.

periodicals, run small businesses or societies. For women who perceived themselves as being without 'experience', the Kensington Society, modelled on men's formal debating societies, was to provide a comfortable secure setting for the discussion of contentious issues

Chapter Three. The women

The broader context for change outlined in Chapter Two impacted on individuals in a range of ways. In this chapter this impact is considered. Two groups of women are examined. Firstly, the lives of a few 'rank and file' women are examined in some detail. Secondly the particular contribution of the older woman is considered. The lives of the former group were perhaps more typical of the experience of middle class women. They included a married woman, a school proprietor and a group of unmarried sisters. The selection of these women does not depend upon their importance or predominance within the movements in which they were involved. Rather, it was an attempt to locate activism within their lives, and discover ways in which women could negotiate the range of issues and experiences of which their lives were made up. The rank and file individuals have been approached through the mediation of biographers who were their contemporaries, and were also relatives or friends. The primary network of women linked directly to the members of the Kensington Society often come from families with a long term commitment to change. They were the women in the sample who were also involved in other organisations to a greater or lesser extent, and because of this were clearly a very important group. To use the term group is misleading. There is little evidence of homogeneity, or identity of experience. They did, however have overlapping interests, relationships and destinations. These had built feelings of connection and shared commitment among both men and women. Beyond this intermediate group were their friends, neighbours, more distant relatives, trades people etc. These women were involved in one or two campaigns at most. They must have experienced very different lives. It was possible that they conformed much more to the stereotype of mid-Victorian womanhood. The histories of most of these women have been lost. They surfaced briefly in the records of the Society of Friends, in the census, as friends given a passing mention in the letters of prime movers. Their names occasionally appeared on subscription lists.

Yet in this context, as women who supported female suffrage at this early stage, they were vitally important. The initial brief for the petition was to obtain one hundred signatures, and fifteen times that number were obtained. These women, the unknowns, were by far the largest group of supporters. Biographical material on these women was rare, mainly because of the very typical nature of their lives. For the leaders, most of the practical aspects of life of women, washing, dressmaking, cooking, were irrelevant. Servants took the burden of these chores, leaving them free to pursue other interests. They had, to a varying extent, ready money in their pockets, whether they did or did not work. Their social circle was comfortable and unproblematic. If they were married, their social position was respectable. If they were single, their

financial resources, or the standing of their male relatives, was such that their status was secure. This was the basis upon which it was possible to pursue a philanthropic, or reforming enterprise. If any sort of ambiguity crept into this status, life immediately became far more difficult, and the woman's value to an organisation became problematic. Bessie Parkes, a central and most influential figure in the 1850's and 1860's, did not become 'problematic' when she converted to Roman Catholicism in 1863, but when she lost her income as a result of failed speculation, she was abandoned by all but her very closest and oldest friends. Matilda Hays, who for a while was editor of the English Woman's Journal, remained a person who was dealt with cautiously, because of her openly intimate relationship with the American actress Charlotte Cushman. Suffrage campaigning colleagues put pressure on Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy to marry when she became pregnant, and she acquiesced in this.

However, at the same time, it was those middle class women who were in an ambiguous position, who had most to gain from the movement for change. It was those women who were running schools, coffee houses, small businesses, working as journalists or artists, who were paying taxes, but who had no representation. It was the governesses and itinerant teachers, ill educated and with work that was inherently insecure, who could benefit from new work and educational opportunities. It was the widows, often householders, who might technically become dependent on sons, or have daughters who needed to be found a place in the world.

Those accounts which have survived are inevitably the success stories, or at last tales of contentment. Individuality lived out in inauspicious circumstances was far more uncomfortable and difficult, with little or no chance that anyone would think it worth recording. Such women would be in stark contrast to the relative serenity of the life of Barbara Bodichon, with her income of £300 per year. The group of women described next, were the women who were most aware of insecurity in their own lives or those of their children and friends. This insecurity was the bottom line of all the campaigns on women's education, employment, suffrage and property.

1. The Ellis sisters, Hannah Pipe and Mary Crudelius.

The biographies which form the source material for this chapter¹ were written by a sister or a friend from a point of view with which the modern reader has little sympathy or understanding. The biographer's main interest was in their attitude to religion and nature. Their subjects' rare forays into the public world are represented as explorations, be it of St Paul's Cathedral or Turkey. Their support for suffrage or other causes usually tends to be ignored, or mentioned only in passing. Yet these

¹Margaret Ellis. Letters and Memoirs of Eliza Ellis. Leicester, privately printed 1883
Anna M Stoddart. Life and Letters of Hannah E. Pipe. Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1908
Katherine Burton. A memoir of Mrs Crudelius. Edinburgh, privately printed 1879.

women were rank and file supporters of women's suffrage, and in view of the lack of other sources, must stand as representatives of some of the groups identified.

Mrs Crudelius was one of forty women living in Edinburgh who signed the petition. In 1866, she was 27 years old, and had been married for the previous six years to a German businessman. (The German community in Manchester was also notable for the interest of both its men and women in the issue of female suffrage.) Mary Crudelius had two young daughters. She was not an intimate of the circle of Edinburgh radicals which included activists such as Elizabeth Pease Nichol, Ursula Bright McLaren, the Wigham sisters, the Stevenson sisters, and Professor and Mrs Masson. However, she was able to organise collaboration with this group in quite a confident way. This does indicate that her social position, as well as her reforming ideas were acceptable to them.

Miss Hannah Pipe was one of more than fifty Principals of schools to sign this suffrage petition. In 1866, she was thirty-five, and ran a successful boarding school, 'Laleham' in Clapham, South London. She drew her pupils predominantly from Methodist and Church of England families from the North of England. In 1858 she had eighteen boarders, paying eighty guineas per annum. She had already made £1000 clear profit since moving from Manchester to London in 1852. She ran the school with the help of her mother. By 1861 with twenty-six pupils, she employed a maid, housekeeper, 'younger servants', and a gardener. She was assisted by a full time teacher who had been trained at Bedford College, and by visiting male and female teachers.² Earlier in 1866, she had become a founder member of the London Association of Schoolmistresses, though she did not support the campaign for opening University Local Examinations for girls.

Margaret, Eliza, Charlotte and Isabella Ellis were among the forty or so Quaker women who have been identified as signing the petition. The relationship and friendship links can be traced between around thirty of these Quaker women. The Ellis sisters seem to be at one of the loose ends of this complex web of connections which encompasses the Bright, Clarke, Impey McLaren and Lucas families, with their governesses and teachers. In 1866, and for most of their lives, the Ellis sisters lived at Belgrave Hall near Leicester. Their home was in an agricultural area, with the local villages also dependent on frame knitting stockings, and there was much economic hardship. Their father was originally a gentleman farmer, who became a railway magnate, and from 1848-1852 was an MP. Only one of the seven sisters was married (for less than a year) and all lived under the same roof for most of their lives. Eliza died in 1882, aged fifty seven, but some of her sisters were active in Leicester well into the next century. After signing the suffrage petition they also subscribed to the Ladies'

²See Chart 4n p.137 for an analysis of these connections in the Bright family.

National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts, and in later life, Eliza agreed that her name should be on the committee of the local Women's Suffrage Association. In 1911 this local Association's annual report recorded a Miss Ellis of Belgrave as a subscriber.

On 12th November 1861, Eliza Ellis, then aged thirty-six, wrote the following description of the home life of the sisters at Belgrave Hall:

I am writing in the schoolroom. Lucy is reading Conybeare and Howson, Nelly doing something with a pair of compasses and a pencil. Charlotte has a minute since left the room in search of some book and has now returned with Don Carlos Jane, Isa and M[argaret] are in the dining room with my father and mother, one of them reading aloud from Prior's life of Burke. We are going through it aloud for my father's entertainment.³

Here is a frozen moment in the life of a family of unmarried Victorian women. This placid life appeared to have continued seamlessly from childhood. It survived the death of their father in 1862 and altered only slightly at the death of their mother ten years later. Their life is enclosed, the language and activities those of a quiet childhood. To escape their father's choice of book (Eliza did not enjoy Burke's Life) they must retreat to the schoolroom. Yet this same Eliza was felt by her sister Margaret to be remarkably politically active. By her friend Lydia Rouse she was characterised as loving to 'face even a wild storm and wrestle with the wind.' When she was twenty-eight Eliza wrote to a friend

Again and again I have felt that it is a happy thing to be one of a large family of sisters, for alike as we are in many ways, there is variety enough to make our intercourse fresh, and the merry peals of laughter and the mock dance on the landing when the twilight makes us desist from reading aloud, brought these thoughts to me⁴

One thing which did seem to have suffered was individuality. Eliza herself carved out physical and emotional space within the household, finding 'a room of her own' which housed her fossil collection. However, on the death of her mother, the sisters seem to have turned to her (though she was not the eldest). This change of role coincided, perhaps significantly, with the onset of a terminal illness, as if she drew her strength from being 'daughter' rather than an individual.

Margaret Ellis, the younger sister who edited a memoir of Eliza after her death was apparently more active within this domestic realm. She was the instigator of the

³Margaret Ellis Letters and Memoirs of Eliza Ellis. Leicester, privately printed, 1883. p. 208.

⁴ibid. p. 66.

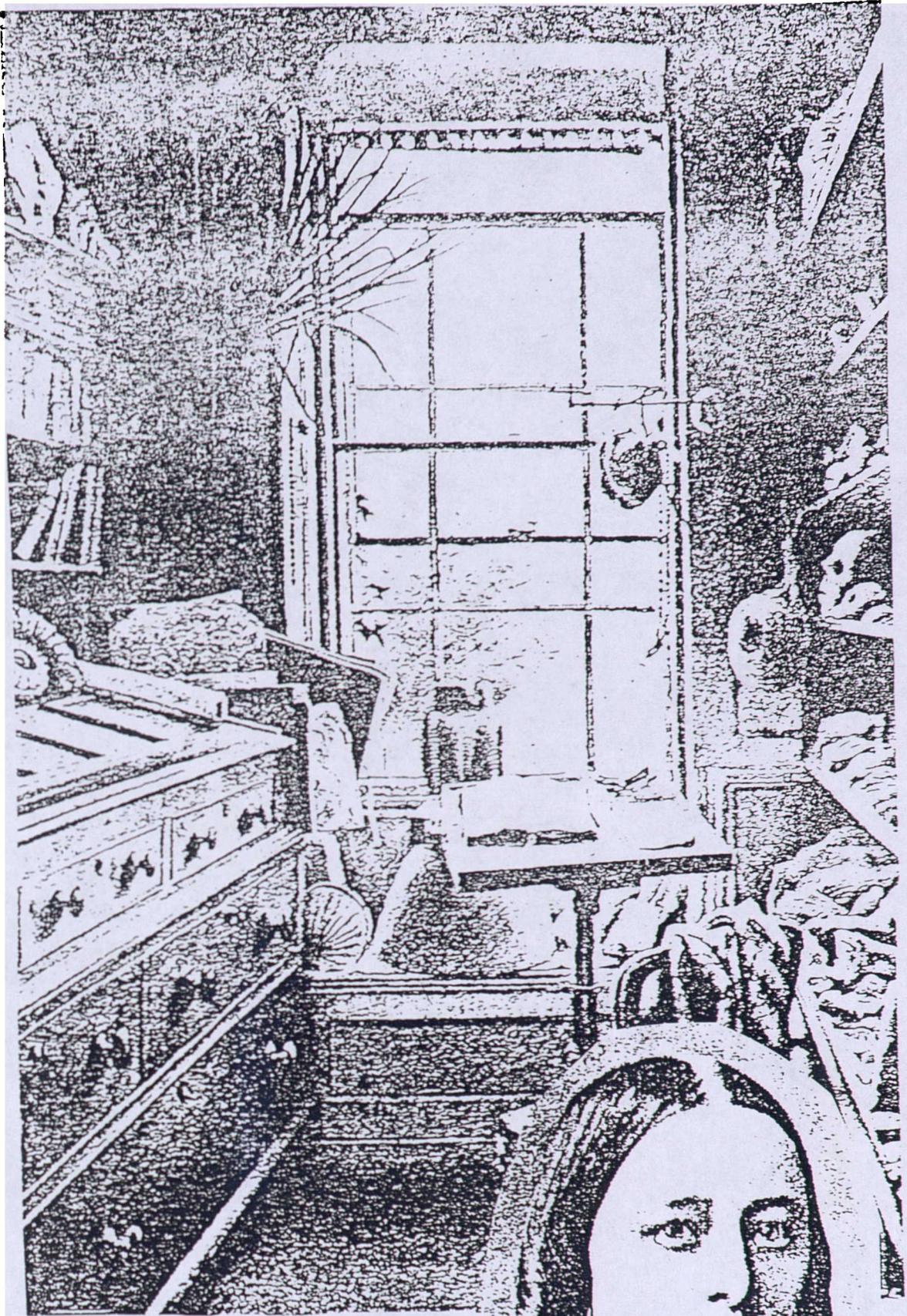


Plate 2. Eliza Ellis, and her 'museum'.



annual Christmas play, and was described when busy costuming and rehearsing Hiawatha or a tableau. She was a competent in her editorial role, yet she is hardly mentioned in her sister's letters. (This may, of course have been the result of personal modesty) It is difficult to establish exactly how many sisters there are from this memoir. The sisters wore a modified Quaker dress, and were quite difficult to tell apart Lydia Rouse, a governess, who met the sisters when visiting in the locality describes meeting Eliza, Charlotte, 'and some sisters'. A young nephew's comment that he was going to visit 'Two, four, six, nine aunties.' became part of the family folklore. When the sisters did their district visiting, they divided the village into sectors, and each had her own When they subscribed to the LNA however, it was the gift of 'The Misses Ellis of Belgrave.'

Eliza's contact with the outside world and the women's movement came through her friendship with two women, Lydia Rouse and Hannah Lucas. Lydia Rouse had become a teacher at the Quaker Ackworth School in 1839 at the age of nineteen After 1851, she became a governess, and worked in several families, including the Peases She and Eliza Ellis made friends while she was visiting a relative in Leicestershire, and kept up their friendship by post. Between 1858 and 1863, Lydia was governess to the children of John Bright, and so was at the heart of Radical political society In 1864 she moved to Mount Mellick School as a teacher, and in 1866 became Principal of The Mount School near York. The professional teacher and the women of leisure corresponded until Eliza's death. It is curious that there is very little reference to her work in Eliza's letters to Lydia. It was Lydia who brought up feminist topics In a letter written in December 1859, Eliza wrote 'Thy remarks on the 'Woman Question' interested me greatly, most heartily do I echo thy ejaculation 'all honour to Bessie Parkes, and Mrs Jameson etc.' They discuss reading Mill, and Henry Fawcett on Co-operation. On one occasion Eliza confides her plan to write an article for the English Woman's Journal on a remarkable woman artist who had lived near Leicester

Eliza's other friend was Hannah Lucas, whom she met when she went as a bridesmaid to a family wedding in her late teens. Eliza visited the Lucas's in Brighton in 1862, but apart from that visit, it seems that the friendship was entirely sustained by post When Eliza was terminally ill, her sisters went to great lengths to try and arrange for both Lydia and Hannah to see her before she died. Hannah Lucas is the most likely person to have gathered the signatures of four of the Ellis sisters for the suffrage petition in 1866. Hannah was the sister of Samuel Lucas, a Radical newspaper editor, whose wife was Margaret Lucas (born Bright). Margaret was later very active in the National Society for Women's Suffrage. She, her daughter, and her sisters in law

Hannah and Sarah Ann in Brighton, and a couple of Quaker teachers there, one of whom had taught in Margaret's family, all signed.

The Ellis sisters were isolated partly because they lived in what was then a small village, but also partly because they were Quakers, and would mainly mix with other members of the Society of Friends. There was a Meeting House in Leicester. Eliza seems to have been regarded in her family as an exceptional and politically committed individual, in spite of her similar upbringing to her sisters. Another sister, Charlotte, was also remembered as especially active in later years. Without exception all the sisters were committed to relieving the acute distress of the stocking frame knitters of the village of Belgrave. They set up a school for girls, and organised subscriptions to feed the knitters in times of famine. Eliza's friendship with two such well connected women clearly kept her up to date with political and women's issues. She seems to have had an independent nature, and her qualities were nurtured, particularly by her father. As a child, Eliza carved physical space out for herself. Margaret Ellis writes

While still a child, the doctor advised our parents to repress [her] eager thirst for knowledge and she was encouraged to lead an easy outdoor life...the study of books of travel proved a very powerful stimulus to her adventurous nature and she began in various ways to imitate the life of a colonist. The hollow stalks of the dead hemlocks furnished her with moulds for candles. Another kindred pursuit was *the improvement of corners of waste land*.⁵

She developed an interest in geology, and made her first museum in a garret above the laundry. This pastime gave her a legitimate excuse for a room of her own at Belgrave. There is a photograph of a narrow room, lined with display cabinets, which was her museum. At the end, under the window, was a table, which was where she liked to work.

The freedom to travel was available to the Ellis sisters, though always in company. Eliza commented revealingly to Hannah Lucas her sensation of aloneness in a public place. The incident reported took place when she was in London with her father at the age of twenty-two:

I met my father as proposed in St Paul's [Cathedral]. I was there half an hour before the time appointed. The feeling of perfect loneliness was rather strange, but I endeavoured to assume as much independence and importance as possible.⁶

⁵ibid pp 16-17

⁶ibid p 33

As a young middle class woman on her own in a public space it was those qualities of importance and independence seemed lacking without the presence of a male family member. Importance and independence for women were the two characteristics which much of the feminist campaigning of these years aimed to achieve

Eliza Ellis's eager thirst for knowledge had a down side. She suffered from bouts of depression, as did her mother. Margaret comments that her mother went to Buxton for her health. 'Our mother's naturally bright and healthy nature was liable to seasons of severe mental depression...in later years the same cloud more than once shadowed my sister's own life.' Margaret does not give any indication of how this depression was treated, if at all, except for the visits to Buxton. Eliza certainly seems to have been given scope to pursue her interests. Within this large country home, and also in the cottage in the forest which the family also used, she had plenty of physical space to vent her energies, and to assuage her depression. The sisters and their mother travelled to Germany, Geneva and as far away as Prague on holiday.

It was through her father that Eliza gained her knowledge of the public world. It was with him that she travelled to London, toured Scotland, and travelled for his business to Northern Ireland. But it was also through him that she got to see a different side of her local area. She must have been a favourite of her father. When she was five or six, he would take her on his rides around the farm, as he met and talked to his employees. Lydia Rouse commented after Eliza's death that:

She had more real pleasure in talking with an intelligent hard working mechanic on political and social questions than in taking part in similar discussions at book meetings and drawing room circles, though alike with the keen witted mechanic and the gentleman of culture, she could hold her own in argument and bravely maintain what she believed to be the right side, even at the cost of considerable pain to herself, for she disliked controversy and her sensitive nature shrunk from anything like antagonism with those around her.⁷

This comment is very revealing, in the ambiguity it displays. Did Lydia admire her friend for her forthrightness, or for her sensitivity? After her father's death, Eliza confided in Lydia about her attitude to him:

I shall miss my father when Parliament opens; very often now I feel I want to ask him questions to which he was always able to reply...He was ever ready to converse with me upon such subjects, always glad to give me the information which I wanted. And now I can ...never see that bright intelligent smile light up that dear face as he listened to my questions.⁸

⁷ibid. . p 483

⁸ibid. p.241

So Eliza gave her father questions, not opinions, and took her view of politics and the public world from him. It is possible that she did this quite uncritically, from the tone of this passage.

Eliza was described as having strong views on women's rights, but yet these views were tempered by her respect for people's right to their own opinions. She did venture to doubt, however 'Whether they have taken the trouble to consider the matter thoughtfully.' Twenty two years after signing the suffrage petition she wrote to Hannah Lucas

I had a note from the secretary of the Branch Committee for Promoting Women's Suffrage, asking for me to allow my name to be placed upon it. I have hitherto shrunk from taking any prominent part in the movement, though I am an annual subscriber to the Society, but I feel now that I ought to allow my name to stand and attend the meeting on Wednesday. I am convinced that women ought to have the suffrage and so I will 'come out' in this way.⁹

The life of Hannah Pipe contrasted strongly with those of the Ellis sisters. She had an urban childhood. She was thrown early into supporting herself, received all her encouragement from her mother, and became the Principal of a successful enterprise; Laleham School in Clapham. In this sample she must represent those school proprietors, lodging house keepers, coffee house owners and the many female heads of household. All these women had an independent financial stake in the world, and perhaps paid taxes, but had no voice in government, and how those taxes were spent.

Hannah Pipe's father was a fancy goods manufacturer in Manchester. He also had a cutlery shop. The family prospered, and moved away from living over the shop (a pattern which Davidoff and Hall ¹⁰ have noted was common at this period.) They had a house in the residential Greenheys district. When Hannah was in her early teens, her father died, leaving a modest £1,500. At this time, Hannah was attending a Quaker school, though her family was in fact Methodist. Her mother was determined to continue her education, as Hannah would have to be self supporting. Her mother kept on the cutlery shop, and the house. She walked the three miles to the shop each day to save money, and managed to earn enough to keep their home until Hannah was able to start a small school in it. The school was successful. Mrs Pipe dealt with the housekeeping and her daughter Hannah taught. Following the advice of friends they

⁹ibid. p.435

¹⁰Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall. Family fortunes,; men and women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850. London, Hutchinson, 1987.

moved the school, with most of its pupils, to Clapham, where eighty guineas a year could be charged, instead of fifty!

In addition to the strong maternal role model, and the support which her mother continued to provide, Hannah also had a male mentor. Dr W. B. Hodgson came to Manchester in 1847, when Hannah was sixteen. He had been a pioneering educator in Liverpool for ten years, and had encouraged the education of girls as well as boys. In Manchester, as Principal of Chorlton [Boys] High School, he put on lectures for girls and women teachers. Hannah was a star pupil, and Dr Hodgson encouraged her. After her move to London, he introduced her to men in London who were willing to teach at her school.

At the same time as she signed the suffrage petition, Hannah was involved in the LAS. She was a successful and innovative Principal, of the type that Emily Davies hoped would enlighten the ignorant members of the Association. She employed ex-pupils of Bedford College, and women like Mrs Elizabeth Malleson who had run Barbara Bodichon's pioneering school Portman Hall, and her sister in law Miss Alice Malleson, both of whom were members of the Kensington Society. She also employed Jane Chessar who was later elected to the London School Board. Yet in her view of girls' education she differed from Emily Davies. Hannah wrote to Emily: 'Does not all this cramming which must be done hinder that free spontaneous growth of the mind which is, after all as much better than knowledge.' She argued that the women who wanted higher education for girls had all got their own education by 'hungering and thirsting after it, and not through being beset with contrivances for compelling them to swallow that for which they had no appetite.'¹¹

At this early stage of the suffrage campaign some three per cent of those who signed the petition were successful Principals of girls' schools. Some of these had already been involved in giving evidence to the Taunton Commission. Many more had signed the Memorial asking for Cambridge University to open the University Local Examinations to girls. Many again are listed as the teachers of successful candidates in those examinations. It also appears that they continued to be involved in campaigns for improvement in women's education. With the notable exception of Elizabeth Wolstenholme, at this time a school proprietor in Manchester, they do not seem to have continued public support for the suffrage campaign.

In 1866 Mrs Mary Crudelius was a young married woman with two young daughters living in Edinburgh. Her life was perhaps more typical of the experiences of middle class women than either the Ellis sisters or Hannah Pipe. Most middle class women married, (as she did at the age of twenty two), having spent a year or two at a girls' school. She does not seem to have been brought up in a particularly radical

¹¹Anna M Stoddart. Life and Letters of Hannah E. Pipe. p. 176

household It is possible that, through her German husband, she came into contact with the radical German business community in Manchester, which was sufficiently large to maintain a cultural club. Her biography, by Katherine Burton ¹² is more of a campaign strategy manual and record of a society, the Edinburgh Ladies' Education Association [ELEA], than a study of her family and religious life. There are some extracts from her correspondence with her husband, which establish that she was a devoted and dutiful wife and mother who discussed the politics of the day with her husband Katherine Burton presents Mary Crudelius, her friend, as an ordinary woman who had one extraordinary achievement. She seems to defend her against the criticism of the Edinburgh establishment, wanting the outsider to get the recognition which was her due Unwittingly demonstrating some of that same prejudice, Professor Laurie, one of those men who lectured to the Association's members, suggested in his contribution to the book that 'perhaps she exaggerated in her own mind the disadvantage to the Association of her social insignificance, commercial origin, and foreign name'¹³ Her biographer also defends her against the criticism which must often have dogged the activist, that of neglecting her domestic duties:

In her domestic and social duties she was entirely exemplary, not unconscious, perhaps, of the strong weapon furnished to the enemies of her sex by every woman who neglects her duty for what some may suppose higher or wider interests Mrs Crudelius, however, did not need the added reason for doing her part as wife, mother and hostess perfectly. She had no dislike of detail and had an unaffected pleasure in society.¹⁴

Burton is quite honest about Crudelius' single mindedness. She described her as she was in 1867

A person continually visiting, without seeming to like it, and truth to tell, few or none liked her visits. She was a woman with a mission so vague that she was so much more dreadful than the woman who whips out her collection book and can be dismissed with a shilling. Mrs Crudelius wished people to listen to her and everyone had their affairs and listened when they must with an unwilling attention. What does she want was the question even of persons not unfriendly to her Some suspected her of self interested motive "it was some sort of school she wanted to set up- not for herself but some friend of hers." When she first began her canvass [for the ELEA.] ...no one person certainly knew what her object was. No one either then or since said Mrs Crudelius did not know it herself. She pursued it through evil report and good report with entire self forgetfulness till she succeeded.¹⁵

¹²Katherine Burton, A memoir of Mrs Crudelius Edinburgh, privately printed 1879.

¹³ibid p 302.

¹⁴ ibid p. 12.

¹⁵ibid. p.13.

Mrs Crudelius described her ELEA in a report to the NAPSS Meeting in 1868. She began with a meeting of six ladies. After six weeks of canvassing, she had sixty to seventy members. Eighty gentlemen, including the Principal of the University and twenty six professors also gave their names. More than 400 women attended the first lecture free, and 265 women enrolled on the first course, given by Professor Masson on English Literature. At the end of the course ninety-four women took the examination, and the external examiner expressed himself most impressed by the quality of the papers. One failure, its founder felt, was that she had only succeeded involving five out of the twenty-five Principals of girls schools in Edinburgh. Students ranged in age from a majority in their early twenties to several in their sixties and seventies, who tended not to take the examinations.

Mrs Crudelius' planned lecture series had coincided with other moves for lectures, and she took on the Edinburgh Radical establishment in order to get her own way. She had already approached Professor Masson in 1866, and had been refused. It was with understandable surprise that she heard from Elizabeth Pease Nichol that the Professor had agreed to lecture to members of the Franchise Association, whose secretary was Miss McLaren. The Professor appears to have been interested in the income that the lectures would generate for him. Mrs Crudelius wrote to Miss McLaren firmly putting her point of view:

I am pleased to find that the feeling for the necessity of something higher than we yet have in the education of women is so widely diffused and is finding simultaneous expression from so many points. My disquietude arises from the fear of splitting into parties¹⁶.

She explained that her interest lay particularly in education. She expressed confidence that the franchise question was in good hands, and told Miss McLaren about her education association:

I think all possible energies should be concentrated in one body for working the political reform, I think that all energies should be concentrated in one body for the advancement of higher education, and moreover, that they should be kept distinct¹⁷

Mrs Crudelius argued her case successfully. She negotiated ruthlessly with Professor Masson and achieved her series of lectures. She proudly recorded, in the letter quoted above to Miss McLaren, that she had signed the 1866 suffrage petition '... and have got what signatures I could since, and quietly working shall be glad to help you as far as I

¹⁶ibid pp. 24-28.

¹⁷ibid.

can.' This 'quiet working' echoes Eliza Ellis saying that she had 'hitherto shrunk'. For Ellis 'coming out' on suffrage was a daring step. Crudelius shrank because of the implications which involvement with suffrage might have for her fledgling education scheme. This reluctance of women, even supporters, to 'come out' had practical implications for any organisation. Burton comments that Crudelius 'was everywhere met by the feminine objection to any employment or office involving even the appearance of publicity. She had much difficulty in inducing ladies to become office holders'. The Hon. President, Lady Dumferline, resigned because her husband died. Mrs Mair became Vice President 'Until someone else could be found.' When Mrs Crudelius heard of the Franchise Association's proposed lectures 'her strong administrative faculty showed her all the danger of this arrangement to her infant scheme'. Her response, to contact McLaren and negotiate co-operation, was seen by her associates as 'undignified, petty, unnecessary'. She must have needed a thick skin to deal with these criticisms, and to engage in very businesslike financial negotiations with Professor Masson who was very much part of the Franchise 'set' in Edinburgh society. She allowed him to earn a good fee, which she felt was a worthwhile concession, as other reputable academics would be attracted to give courses. Students were charged one and a half guineas for the course of thirty lectures, of which he took one guinea and the Association the half guinea. 'in identifying himself so completely with our interests [he] has been richly repaid'. The Association was in funds too, and able to continue with new series of lectures.

As has been noted, these women are clearly exceptional, or rather, the women who wrote about them felt that they had qualities which were exceptional, and worthy of recording, if only for a family audience, as in the case of the Ellis sisters. What are the specifically 'feminist' qualities and characteristics that these biographers pointed out as admirable in these women who supported 'women's rights'? All three women, either physically or socially, proved themselves able to mark out for themselves a clear personal space. In the house crowded with girls, Eliza Ellis had her museum and her garden plots which she 'tamed'. Pipe controlled a school, employees, pupils. Crudelius made space in a fairly hostile environment for the idea which she forced into reality. (Other women, like Frances Power Cobbe and Harriet Grote also celebrated possession of a room or garden of their own.)

All three had proved themselves able to debate, or engage in negotiation with men, Crudelius and Pipe as employers, Ellis in discussion groups, and conversations with intelligent working men. Mary Crudelius was particularly remarkable, in that she not only took on Professor Masson, and negotiated an advantageous deal, but also, in so doing, successfully undercut the educational enterprises of the radical Edinburgh

establishment. Hannah Pipe owed much to a male mentor, but subsequently used this connection to good effect when recruiting the male teachers at her school from among his friends. Although she did not believe that young women needed competitive examinations, this did not mean that they should not have access to the best qualified teachers available, who at this time were men.

All three were aware of, and curious about, current affairs and issues. This interest, as well as being broad, also focused on women's issues which ranged from education, through philanthropy to suffrage. Hannah Pipe, as well as becoming involved in the LAS, met regularly with two or three other Principals of larger girls' schools, to discuss innovations, which she would try out at Laleham. The Ellis sisters came from a family involved in the Anti-Slavery campaigns. Their father discussed politics with them, and they subscribed to the LNA, and were involved in the Leicester Branch of the Society for Women's Suffrage in the 1900's. The correspondence between Mrs Crudelius and her husband included lively discussion of, for example, John Stuart Mill's position on women's suffrage.

That these three characteristics surface within the format of mildly hagiographic family biographies and memoirs may mean that they were perceived as qualities which were both unusual and admirable.

2. The role of older women .

Women born before 1820 provided a substantial number of those who signed the 1866 suffrage petition. Although most of the members of the Kensington Society were in their thirties or forties, older women provided vital support in the feminist innovations of the 1850's and the education, employment and suffrage campaigns of the 1860's. This section examines in detail the ways in which certain older women supported their younger friends and actively promoted 'feminism' among them. The women, all born between 1792 and 1812, include Mrs Harriet Grote¹⁸, Mrs Anna Brownell Jameson¹⁹, Mrs Reid,²⁰ founder of Bedford College, (who died in 1866), her sister Miss Mary

¹⁸Mrs Harriet Grote nee Lewin. 1792-1875. Had a reputation among the Philosophic Radicals of being their best political thinker. She had an intellectual salon. Her husband, George Grote was a historian and Philosophic Radical. She created the Society of Female Artists, and was patron to the dancer Fanny Elssler and other women performers.

¹⁹Anna Brownell Jameson. [did not sign the Suffrage petition- died 1860] 1794-1860. After an acrimonious marital separation, supported herself by art criticism and other writing. On committee of the National Association for Social Science.

²⁰Mrs Elizabeth Jesser Reid. nee Sturch. 1794-1866. Anti-Slavery activist, Founded Bedford College 1849

Sturch,²¹ Miss Julia Smith,²² Mrs Charlotte Manning,²³ Elizabeth Pease Nichol,²⁴ and Clementia Taylor ²⁵

These women were usually family friends of young activists like Barbara Bodichon, Emily Davies, Anna Mary Howitt, and Bessie Rayner Parkes. They often shared radical sympathies with the parents of these younger women and had also been connected through Anti-Slavery campaigning. All were childless, though Harriet Grote had one child who had only survived for days, an experience which some of the others may have shared. Unusually, for middle class women in the 1840's-1860's, most had some exposure to the public world, either in their own right as writers or campaigners, or as active hostesses for their political or intellectual men folk. They had been brought up without quality education, without benefit of discussion societies, self-help groups or organisations specifically aimed at improving the lives of women. They enabled these benefits to be available to the next generation, freely acknowledging that these younger women would achieve far more than they had done.

These women grew up in a period of intense political debate following the French Revolution. They must have read Wollstoncraft, and they moved in the same social circles as Harriet Taylor Mill. Harriet Lewin, Charlotte Solly and Clementia Taylor mixed as adolescents and young women with the Radical philosophers in the circle of James Mill. Harriet Lewin married one of the leaders of that circle, George Grote. The Anti-Slavery campaign was at its height when they were in their thirties and forties, (the period at which their young friends were themselves most active, as will be shown in Chapter Six). The experience which this campaign in particular gave women in the public world has already been mentioned.

These women acted upon their young friends in four main ways. First they were prime movers in ambitious projects for the benefit of women. Secondly they made bold public moves themselves, often in spite of advanced age and cloistered lives. Thirdly they enabled young women to meet in situations where they could discuss women's rights and improve both their confidence and intellectual competence. Finally, they gave affectionate encouragement to individuals at significant moments in their lives.

The projects which improved middle class women's access to the world were Bedford College, NAPSS and the Society of Female Artists.[SFA]. The idea of a

²¹Miss Mary Sturch. Sister of Mrs Reid and co-founder of Bedford College.

²²Miss Julia Smith. 1799-? Aunt of Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. Supported Anti-Slavery and Bedford College.

²³Mrs Charlotte Manning, nee Solly, then Mrs Speir. 1803-1870. Writer on Indian history, Bedford College Committee, Hostess to Kensington Society, First Mistress of Girton College (at Hitchin).

²⁴Mrs Elizabeth Pease Nichol nee Pease. 1807- 1897. Founder of women's Anti-slavery society, supporter of suffrage, medical education for women etc.

²⁵Mrs Clementia Taylor, 1812- Wife of Peter Alfred Taylor MP. Political and literary hostess at Aubrey House, Kensington. Involved in early suffrage societies.

college to educate middle class girls who were likely to become governesses had already been tried out at Queen's College, London, founded in 1848.²⁶ Many women involved in running Bedford College, on its mixed Committee, or as Lady visitors, had already had some involvement with Queen's College, London. Unlike Queen's College, with its Church of England founder, the Christian Socialist Maurice, Bedford college had no religious education in its curriculum. Its Unitarian founders welcomed Jews, Quakers, Non-conformists, and Anglicans, and at least two of its students became Roman Catholics²⁷. Both colleges had male teachers, though two Kensington Society members, Sophia Jex-Blake and Emily Bovell taught for a time at Queen's College London, before going on to train as doctors. Elizabeth Reid and her fellow committee members ensured that the administration of Bedford College included a high proportion of women. There was a Lady Resident who ran a boarding house, and as at Queen's College, London, lady visitors, who acted as chaperones, also met in committee and influenced the college social policy. The founders, especially Elizabeth Reid, maintained a close interest in Bedford College students. She kept in touch with past students, and actively sought needy young women to sponsor from her own pocket. The correspondence of Annette Akroyd²⁸ contains many letters which bear witness to the continuing warm relationships between Mrs Reid, her sister Miss Sturch, Miss Bostock and Miss Thomas, on the administrative side of Bedford College, and their past students. As well as encouraging them to continue to study, and seeking their recommendations of needy students, Miss Bostock also recruited some of them to the Kensington Society.

Bedford College not only benefited young women as full-time or part-time students. It also gave older women the opportunity to become involved in the administration of a large public institution. The role of Lady Visitor also gave them access to the lectures which their charges were receiving. Charlotte Manning (when Mrs Speir) and Julia Smith were on the Committee and later supported educational and suffrage campaigns organised by their young friends who had been students at their college. These students included Barbara Leigh Smith and her sisters (one of whom signed the suffrage petition), Bessie Parkes, Anna Swanwick (a mature student who also acted as a Lady Visitor), and many members of the Howitt, Wedgwood, Lushington, Martineau, Le Breton, Sturge, Lewin, Malleson and Whitehead families who went on to support suffrage in or after the 1866 petition. Thus the founders gave

²⁶Mary Rosalie Glynn Grylls. *Queen's College, 1848-1948*. London, George Routledge, 1948.
 Elaine Kaye *History of Queen's College London*. London, Queen's College, 1972., Margaret Tuke.
A History of Bedford College for Women, 1849-1937. London, Oxford University Press 1939

²⁷For the stance of Unitarian radicals on the issue of the religious faith of others, see Kathryn Gladle, *The Early Feminists, Radical Unitarians and the Emergence of the Women's Rights Movement*. London, Macmillan, 1995, pp. 9-21.

²⁸Correspondence of Annette Akroyd. Beveridge Papers. India Office Library.

these privileged young women access to those students who were destined to earn their living as governesses or teachers in small schools. These friendships, within and between the two groups of students laid the foundation for networks called on during the education and suffrage campaigns of the mid 1860's.

When the NAPSS was formed, Anna Jameson, Mrs Austin, Mary Howitt and Emily Taylor were involved at its inception, and were on its committee. They ensured the right of women to become members and to deliver papers at the annual Meetings. The lists of delegates to these meetings often include the names of whole families, including daughters and wives. The Meetings were held in Edinburgh and Dublin as well as other large provincial cities, and though many delegated travelled to the meetings from elsewhere, there was usually a large contingent of local people, offering women living in provincial cities a chance to hear quality debate on the issues of the day. The Meetings also included local tours to places of interest, model factories etc., which again offered insights to delegates. At least seven women who signed the suffrage petition used papers at a meeting to publicise such varied topics as education suffrage and the employment of women. Mrs Crudelius, for example, delivered a paper on the ELEA. The proceedings were published, and also watched carefully by the press. There were apparently also bookstalls, and Bessie Parkes would regularly canvass for subscribers to the English Woman's Journal at the Meetings. Thus by being committee members, the older women involved enabled young women to express ideas and describe their initiatives to audiences which could number 2,000 people. They enabled them to join in debate which was comparable with that in Parliament, as Bessie Parkes commented. [see Chapter Two.] The Association employed a woman, Isa Craig, as its Assistant Secretary, and encouraged the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, and the Female Emigration Society. These organisations based at Langham Place thus received respectability and publicity, thanks to the efforts of the women committee members.

Harriet Grote founded the Society of Female Artists in 1856.²⁹ She encouraged her friends to support the enterprise financially, and as patrons. She worked with her friend Mrs Stanley, and her husband George Grote also assisted. His support was essential, since he, as a man, was necessary as guarantor for the rent of the exhibition room. The SFA provided an annual exhibition, a much needed outlet for women painters. The society's exhibitions were criticised for poor quality and lack of critical selection, but the society nevertheless survived under a variety of names until 1906. The contribution of Mrs Grote was acknowledged by artists like Barbara Bodichon and Eliza Bridell Fox, who were interested in expanding employment

²⁹Society of Female Artists. 1st-51st Exhibition Catalogues. London, 1857-1906. Pamela Gerrish Nunn. Victorian Women Artists. London, Women's Press, 1987, pp. 72-87. Lady Eastlake. Mrs Grote. London, John Murray, 1880.

opportunities for women in the arts. Such an enterprise was not commercially viable, and in 1864 Harriet Grote complained to a friend:

I have come [to town] ... to close the concern of our 'Female Artists Society,' and pay the smart money for cancelling the lease at the gallery, one hundred and twenty pounds out of my own pocket, O la. Never mind, shall commit no more benevolent follies.³⁰

The enterprise had involved soliciting works by creditable artists like Rosa Bonheur, and organising fund raising concerts. One in July 1861 starred the singer Jenny Lind, and attracted an audience of 400, paying a guinea each.

As well as providing opportunities for younger women in these ways, older women also gave public support to their younger friends in their efforts to offer access to higher education to women. Charlotte Manning took up the controversial public post of first Mistress of Girton College, at Hitchin in 1869. She did this telling Emily Davies that she did not intend to stay long, but came with the '...express purpose of appearing before an unbelieving and suspicious public as the responsible promoter of a new college and of helping to give the college at the outset a stamp of seriousness and solidity.'³¹ Charlotte Manning had been supporting women's education for years behind the scenes, in the committee room, but here she showed herself ready to step into the public gaze. She offered the young institution her own respectability, becoming a 'mother figure' at Hitchin. In this way she gave the public institution the quality of a respectable middle class home. This respectability was not only essential to ensure financial contributions, but also to reassure parents of potential students.

Another way in which these older women encouraged their young friends was by their example in the public world. Harriet Grote actually spoke for women's suffrage at the age of seventy-eight, at a public meeting. Elizabeth Pease Nichol had worked on committees since the 1830's when she had helped her father and step mother in the cause of Anti-Slavery. However, one of the most remarkable actions of her long career as an activist in a range of good causes was a very public one. In January 1871 a meeting was held at which rowdy Edinburgh University medical students contested the right of women to study with them. Those fighting for this right included two members of the Kensington Society, Sophia Jex Blake (who did not sign the suffrage petition) and Emily Bovell, and the daughter of Matilda Chaplin. As male students disrupted the meeting, Mrs Nichol:

³⁰Thomas Herbert Lewin. The Lewin letters. London, Printed for private circulation, 1909. vol. 2, p 253. 24th August 1864.

³¹Girton College, Emily Davies Papers

Came forward to ask a question "Not" she said "in the interests of the lady students, but on behalf of those women who look forward to see what kind of men were they who were to be the sole medical attendants of the next generation, if women were not allowed." She asked how these present students could "Possess either the scientific spirit or the personal purity of mind which alone could justify their presence in the female wards during the most delicate operations on, and examination of, female patients."³²

Following this remarkable intervention at a traumatic public occasion, Elizabeth Pease Nichol wrote to Sophia Jex Blake explaining the reasons for her intervention. She was eager to show the young women her appreciation of their courage, and wrote to tell:

How deeply grateful everyone who has the welfare of the next generation at heart must feel to you who are so nobly fighting the battle which must soon be gained, the results of which will bear precious fruit... long, long after your heads are laid in the grave You and the struggle you are carrying on remind me so forcibly of the contest which the band of women in America so nobly waged with the demon of slavery.³³

This frank private encouragement was essential to the young women who were challenging the status quo Anna Jameson (who died in 1860) and Mary Howitt encouraged the discussion of women's rights issues among their young friends, who included Mary Howitt's daughters, Anna Mary and Margaret, Barbara Leigh Smith, Bessie Rayner Parkes, and the poet Adelaide Ann Procter, (who died in 1864). This began when the young women were in their late teens and early twenties. Anna Jameson's advice and criticism was important to Bessie Parkes and Barbara Bodichon when they set up the English Woman's Journal Among the shareholders were representatives of an earlier generation of women, including Miss Mary Sturch and Clementia Taylor's [probable] mother in law, Mrs Catherine Taylor³⁴. Anna Jameson advised on editorial policy, and was frankly critical of some of the staff, particularly the controversial Matilda Hays. Two semi-public lectures given by Anna Jameson to a group of her young friends on women's work and sisterhoods in Europe were reproduced in the journal.

Between 1865 and 1867, Charlotte Manning offered her home as the venue for the Kensington Society, and was its President. Though members were mainly well-to-do, few had homes which could comfortably accommodate thirty to forty women at a meeting. When Charlotte Manning took the position of Mistress of Girton, she gave the public institution the respectability of a home. When she lent her home for the

³²Margaret Todd. Life of Sophia Jex Blake. London, Macmillan, 1918.

³³ibid.

³⁴Memorandum of Association of the English Women's Journal Company Ltd. Registered 13.2.1858-20.3.1860. Registration No. 4688. B.T.41/227/1274.

Kensington Society meetings, she provided a public space for her friends to debate contentious issues in perfect privacy.

Each of these women gave moral and practical support to young women individually. There is little evidence of how these women related to their own mothers [see Chapter five] Did they relate particularly well to these older women because they were not close to their own mothers? Some, like Barbara Bodichon and Frances Power Cobbe, lost their mothers in childhood or adolescence. The relationships with older friends were mutually supportive, offering the older women an experience of motherhood, influence, and some much needed power over the future. Harriet Grote spoke of her [several] relationships with younger, creative women as an 'investment', an emotionally risky business, but with the potential for rich rewards.

Harriet Grote's friendship with Kate Stanley, Lady Amberley was of benefit to both Harriet introduced Kate Stanley to John Stuart Mill and his step daughter, Helen Taylor Through them she met Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett, at the beginning of their medical and suffrage campaigning. In May 1870 Kate Stanley gave a public lecture on suffrage in Stroud The fact that the daughter in law of a past Prime Minister had spoken on such an issue in public provoked outrage. Stung by this criticism, Kate had written a letter to The Times in self justification. Following this Harriet Grote wrote to her:

I do not doubt that you have a large amount of support and approval for your gallant advocacy- even from our timorous sex. But, my dearest girl, nobody can defend your writing such letters as that which appeared in the Times, purporting to be a correction or explanation...Do, I beg of you, reflect, before you write to the papers, what you want to establish- your letter was the very counterpart of Bessie Parkes effusions, and such vague, commonplace would-be teachers of public opinion as she.³⁵

In return for such honest advice, Kate Stanley offered affection. On one occasion the seventy-year-old Harriet Grote confided her distress on discovering her husband's infidelity, which had occurred many years before. *The understanding and sympathy* of a woman of a younger generation must have been a comfort to a woman expected to accept and ignore the double standard of sexual morality.

The acquisition of a step-daughter on marriage could lead to fruitful relationships between the generations. Charlotte Manning developed a close and productive relationship with her step daughter Elizabeth Adelaide Manning. They shared many interests, particularly a fascination with India and a dedication to

³⁵ Bertrand and Patricia Russell. eds. The Amberley Papers, The letters and diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley. 2 vols., London, Hogarth Press, 1937. p.349.

promoting education for girls. Together they set up the National Indian Association³⁶. This brought together people who were interested in India, people who had worked in India, and also supported Indian nationals who were students in Britain. Adelaide Manning became an unofficial student at Hitchin when her mother was Mistress there.

Clearly these friendships between women of different ages were very sustaining to both older and younger women. These relationships were also, however, the means whereby the expertise and wisdom of the older women could be passed on to the younger generation. In the absence of good formal education, these older women supplied intellectual stimulation and the space to discuss ideas. They shared dreams and helped the younger women to put them into practice. But more than that, they set up the earliest institutions which gave some women access to education and the public world. They enabled discussion and action, and they provided a richly nurturing sympathy from which their young friends drew sustenance for many years. Thanks largely to them and their innovations, the networks and connections were in place which were drawn on in May 1866 to collect signatures for a petition on women's suffrage.

³⁶India Office Library. National Indian Association papers.

Chapter Four. The Kensington Society and the Suffrage Petition.

This chapter is in five parts. Part 1 focuses on the Kensington Society itself, and on its membership. Part 2 looks at the origins and mechanics of the petition, and the chronology and method of its collection. Part 3 uses the petition itself as a source to establish the type of women who supported suffrage in May-June 1866. Part 4 looks at the geography of the petition, and Part 5 at the social networks which were employed in its collection

1. The Membership of the Kensington Society.¹

Emily Davies described the origins of the Kensington society thus:

The agitation for the opening of the local examinations had brought into communication with each other a good many people having more or less common interests and aims, and it seemed desirable that the cessation, for the moment, of the special occasion for co-operation should not result in our losing touch of [sic] each other. With a view to supplying some sort of link between us, a small society was started, for the discussion of questions of common interest.²

On 10th March 1865, Mrs Alice Westlake³ wrote to her friend Miss Helen Taylor, passing on an invitation to join the Kensington Society:

Miss Emily Davies has asked me to send you the enclosed paper and to ascertain if you could be persuaded to join the Society. None but intellectual women are admitted and therefore it is not likely to become a merely puerile or gossiping Society, and the questions which will probably be asked will be some of those, I think, which you have specially studied.⁴

On the 20th March Alice Westlake encouraged Helen Taylor again. Perhaps responding to doubts she may have expressed about the quality of the membership, and copyright on papers, (a question relevant to the professional writers in the Society.) she wrote:

¹See Chart 6f for a full list of members

²Girton College Emily Davies Papers, Family Chronicle.

³Mrs Alice Westlake, nee Hare, was daughter of Thomas Hare, inventor of proportional representation, and was married to another member of the Law Amendment Society and National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.

³ London School of Economics. Mill Taylor Papers Vol. XIV, 102, Alice Westlake to Helen Taylor 10th March 1865.

I enclose you the first set of questions of the Kensington Society. There are very few of the members whom you will know by name- Miss Cobbe, Miss Collet who writes in the Spectator, Miss Garrett and Miss Boucherett who founded the Society. The object of the society is chiefly to serve as a sort of link, though a slight one, between persons, above the average of thoughtfulness and intelligence who are interested in common subjects, but who have not many opportunities of mutual intercourse. The papers contributed will be the property of the writers.⁵

This introduction to Helen Taylor demonstrates the aspects of the Society which were unusual at the time, and which have largely been ignored by contemporary historians. 'There are very few of the members who you will know by name...' Alice Westlake mentions only four members, presumably none of whom Helen Taylor had met. Alice Westlake knew Helen Taylor through the association of her father Thomas Hare (originator of the idea of proportional representation) with Helen Taylor's stepfather John Stuart Mill. There was at this period a passion for societies, many of which were formal and philanthropic. Others were informal. Women like Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Rayner Parkes contributed to such a club, the Pen and Pencil Club. It was held at Aubrey House, Kensington, the home of Clementia Taylor and her husband, Radical MP Peter Taylor. Regular 'evenings' would be held, when members would share their poetry, stories and art work, or present responses to a given theme. A group of women including Parkes, Bodichon and others had founded an informal club for creative women, The Portfolio Club, whose meetings had been attended by Christina Rossetti among others.⁶

These informal organisations, however, were based on social networks which already existed. The Kensington Society moved a little way away from this informality, by itself being the means of introducing women who had 'not many opportunities of mutual intercourse'. This lack of opportunity was not solely the result of the women belonging to different social circles. Women joined the society who lived in widely scattered localities, as corresponding members. Many also lacked that opportunity for socialising because of the pressure of work. Members included at least one daily governess working a nine hour day and running a home for her father and brothers. Women like Frances Buss, and Dorothea Beale organised (and taught in) girls' schools with several hundred pupils.

In May 1865, in a letter to Anna Richardson, Emily Davies wrote:

⁵ibid Vol XIV, 103, Alice Westlake to Helen Taylor, 20th March 1865.

⁶Information from Jan Marsh.

The Kensington Society.

The following Rules have been agreed upon provisionally, subject to such modifications as experience may suggest:—

Questions will be issued four times a year. Answers may be given either in a single sentence or at any length which the subject may seem to require. Members will not be expected to write on every question. They will be requested to suggest one question each term, and from the list thus furnished, the Committee will select the three which appear to them of the greatest general interest. Questions may be on any subject which is not merely personal or local.

Selections from the answers will be printed from time to time, at the discretion of the Committee, for circulation among the members, and a social meeting will be held each term, at which papers will be read, followed by conversation.

An annual subscription of half-a-crown, and an entrance fee of half-a-crown (additional) will constitute membership. The financial year will end on March 25.

The Committee will exercise a veto on the admission of members. Applications for admission to be addressed to the Secretary, 17 Cunningham Place, London, N.W.

Committee.

Ms MR. SERJEANT MANNING.

MISS ISA CRAIG.

MISS DAVIES. (*Hon. Sec.*)

* * * The first set of questions will be issued March 25, 1865. The answers, with the question suggested for the ensuing term, to be sent in on or before, May 15.

We have announced ten vacancies and intend to select from the members proposed, who may be twenty or thirty, those we think most desirable. This is a stratagem (borrowed from the Century Club) for sifting without personal offence to anybody I wish you belonged to the Kensington. We are getting a delightful set of members. Some of the papers already sent in are very good, and we are looking forward to an interesting discussion upon them on the 23rd⁷

The openness of the Society to women who were not acquainted socially clearly had to be carefully monitored. The 'old-girl' networks of Queen's College London and Bedford College were used to recruit younger members, while older ex-pupils had already been in touch, as Davies remarked, during the campaign for opening the University Local Examinations to girls between 1862 and 1864.

The committee consisted of Emily Davies (Honorary Secretary), Isa Craig and Charlotte Manning. According to the rules, the committee could exercise a veto on the admission of members. That committee itself ensured access to a large group of potential members through each of its three officials. In the course of organising the education campaigns over the past two years, Emily Davies had contacted over a thousand people involved in the education of girls. She had spent some months as Editor of the English Woman's Journal as well. Isa Craig had been first editor of the English Woman's Journal, thus being in contact with some 200 subscribers, as well as contributors, and the active group of volunteers involved with the projects centred on Langham Place. More significantly, perhaps, she had also been employed as paid secretary of the NAPSS. This brought her into contact with the women, and families of men who attended the annual Meetings of that organisation. Charlotte Manning had been on the committee of Bedford College, had close links with the circle of philosophic radicals, and as a historian, was in touch with intellectual women writers, as well as being practically involved with the recent education campaigns.

The members were inevitably reasonably well-to-do, since the Society had an annual subscription of half a crown, and an entrance fee of half a crown for each meeting. Questions, and written papers were circulated in advance which must have involved effort and costly postage, which perhaps explains the high membership fee. The questions were issued four times a year, and members might speak at meetings, or submit written answers. It is frustrating to the historian that very little information survives on the content of these papers, and virtually nothing of the discussions, which were apparently not minuted. The Kensington Society met in the home of Mrs Charlotte Manning, whose husband was

⁷Girton College. Emily Davies Papers. Emily Davies to Anna Richardson, May 1865.

Sergeant at Law. The venue at 44, Phillimore Gardens, was a substantial double fronted detached house in a quiet street in Kensington. The members, though firmly embedded in the middle class, if only because of the fee and selection process, were not drawn from Kensington alone, though one or two lived within walking distance of Phillimore Gardens. The link was not just between neighbours, or just upper middle class Londoners. Corresponding members lived as far away as Dorset and St Andrews.

The Kensington Society was unique, at a time when societies proliferated. It was not solely philanthropic, cultural, or political. It offered opportunities for discussion of a wide range of issues. It was held in a private setting, a home. Its membership, as Alice Westlake wrote, was exclusively of intellectual women with common interests but with not many other opportunities for mutual intercourse. Some Kensington Society members later organised or joined societies which sought women's suffrage after 1866. These societies had mixed membership and traditional executive/committee/subscriber structures of male organisations. The Kensington Society was an all female organisation, which organised an all female petition. As such, its importance has been undervalued. Credit has been given for the achievement of the petition itself, the speed with which it was collected, and its importance in spawning an organised campaign. Less interest has been shown in the membership of the Society itself, and the calibre of its members.

One of the advantages of the Society to its members, was as a private forum for frank debate. Yet the only debate for which minutes survive was on 'The Limits of obedience of daughters', a comparatively uncontroversial subject. Among titles debated in 1867 were 'What form of government is most favourable to women', 'To what extent is it desirable that boys and girls should be educated in the same subjects?', 'How can women be made to work well together?', 'If women should have the Franchise, ought they also to be made eligible for the County Magistracy, for the House of Commons, for the Poor Law Board, for inspectorship of schools, etc., etc., etc.?'⁸ The very privacy, which enabled women with a range of different backgrounds and 'experiences' to talk freely, mitigates against discovering how the debates were conducted, how arguments were put forward, and what conclusions were reached.

The membership list of the society in the Emily Davies Papers provided names and addresses⁹. From this list, it was possible to discover more about the circumstances and campaigning involvement of over half the members. But first the group itself needs to be scrutinised, and its exceptional nature explored. The first batch of members enrolled in the

⁸ibid Kensington Society [List of topics for discussion]. E.D.IX/Ken 3

⁹ibid Membership List. E.D IX/Ken 1

Kensington Society in March 1865. As well as the hostess, Mrs Charlotte Manning, and Isa Craig and Emily Davies as secretaries, 33 women enrolled. Subsequently on April 19th, May 8th and 16th, July 4th and August 1st, 17 new members were registered. Another fifteen joined before the final abandonment of the society.

The society's membership expanded through personal recommendation. Some younger members were nominated by Miss Bostock of Bedford College. In an undated letter from this time, Miss Bostock, one of Bedford College's founders, wrote to a favourite ex-pupil, Annette Akroyd, thus:

I cannot permit the noun 'swell'. No, Annette, it will not do from the pen of a lady. I hope some good things will come from the pen of our little Stourbridge lady for the Kensington Society. The chief value of membership will consist in giving you an occasion to concentrate and formalise your thoughts, also you will have my severest searching criticisms!¹⁰

Miss Bostock apparently saw the society as an extension of the intellectual encouragement offered by the college, and by herself personally to the college's brighter students. On 3rd October, Emily Davies wrote to Annette Akroyd:

My dear Miss Akroyd,
I am glad to tell you that on Miss Bostock's proposal you have been elected a member of the Kensington Society. I enclose the rules and the questions for the current term. Yours very truly, Emily Davies¹¹

In August 1865, another protege of Miss Bostock had joined the Kensington Society. Ellen Nichols lived in Petersfield with her widowed father and two younger brothers. She had attended Bedford College at the same time as Annette Akroyd, and had continued to correspond with her. However the background and circumstances of the two young women were very different. Ellen had returned to Petersfield to work as a daily governess. In Ellen's letters, the Kensington Society is poignantly interwoven with the realities of her life. She could only be a corresponding member, and even that could prove difficult. On August 4th she wrote to Annette:

I had some papers from 'the Kensn.' yesterday which I enclose for you to see [Akroyd was not yet a member], but I must ask you to let me have them again, as I

¹⁰India Office Library, Beveridge Papers. Mss Eur c 176 Miss Bostock to Annette Akroyd Monday Evening [1865]

¹¹India Office Library, Beveridge Papers. Mss Eur c 176 Emily Davies to Annette Akroyd 3rd October 1865. n.b. these letters are in an uncatalogued bundle.

shall want to begin work, not before next month, however, Fred [her brother] is to go to school then if all is well so I expect to have a little more time.¹²

In October, Ellen articulated her feelings about the intellectual isolation which she felt. In the life of a young woman working from dawn to late at night, with only an hour or two on Sundays for reading and discussion with a friend, the Kensington Society's demands for 'papers' put her under pressure. Emily Davies, when planning the LAS, found this overwork among teachers one of the obstacles to 'enlightening' them by exercises in self help. If a woman had to work as a teacher or daily governess, she was often looking after dependants, and was certainly looking after her own needs for food and dress, and had little time and energy for reading, study or writing, however much she longed to do it:

I think I must have valued intellectual work too much. [wrote Ellen Nichols to Annette Akroyd] I must have forgotten the other side of life. Now I have very little of the intellectual, and I find the loss very hard to bear, but I try to feel sure it is right for me to bear it because I believe each one is placed in his or her right station. I know you and most of my old college friends will get far beyond me, but I must keep from envying you, lest I go wrong. As to going in for Matriculation, it is out of the question. I don't know how I shall get enough time for the Kensington Society, for I am always liable to interruptions.¹³

While Ellen was encountering problems finding time to write her papers, those who did manage to write could come across difficulties when tackling more controversial issues. Membership of the Kensington Society did not necessarily mean that the woman came from a family which was supportive to feminist ideas. Before circulating Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon's paper on 'Female Suffrage' to members Emily Davies cautioned her about the impact that it might have. She advised her against the use of such inflammatory words as 'foolish' and 'outlawry', commenting that:

I would not mind saying few indignant things at the meeting, but these papers travel about the country and go into families where they may be read by prejudiced men, so it is necessary to be careful.¹⁴

That such language appeared to be so subversive explained why privacy was important. It also explained the lack of records of the society's proceedings (or their destruction). Only by such restraint in the public documents of the society, could frank discussion in its private deliberations be ensured.

¹²ibid Ellen Nichols to Annette Akroyd [1865]

¹³ ibid n d

¹⁴Girton College Bodichon Papers, Box 1b1. Emily Davies to Barbara Bodichon, 14th November, 1865.

The topic on which Barbara Bodichon chose to speak to the Kensington society was the necessity for female suffrage. This had been under discussion in the press following the General Election in the previous year. John Stuart Mill's name was already associated with the issue as an advocate. Elizabeth Wolstenholme had already been *involved in organising a small women's suffrage committee in Manchester in October 1865*, which involved other women and their husbands. It is not clear exactly when Barbara Bodichon delivered her paper to the Kensington Society, but the warning from Emily Davies to Barbara Bodichon quoted above was sent on 14th November 1865, and the meeting immediately after that was on 25th November.¹⁵ Neither her first draft for circulation to members, the paper which was circulated, nor minutes of the meeting at which her ideas were presented to the society survive. The exchange between herself and Emily Davies, prior to the circulation of the draft paper indicates the problematic nature of the topic, even when presented to the all-women society.

The ideas which Barbara Bodichon put forward to the Kensington Society were refined in the light of the response to the petition of 7th June 1866, and edited for presentation to a mixed audience. At the meeting of the NAPSS in October 1866 Bodichon presented her paper through a male intermediary. However her paper was not printed in the transactions of that year's meeting, though it was mentioned in those transactions.¹⁶ The paper had aroused the interest of some in the audience, notably Lydia Becker (who declared that she would have liked to have been the 1,500th person to sign the petition). The paper, as subsequently printed, gives a valuable insight into the particular arguments for suffrage which had captured the imagination of that half of Kensington Society members who supported the idea of female suffrage. It also gives some indication of those arguments which might have been put forward in the pamphlet sent out with the petition itself. Bodichon pointed out that:

Many people are unable to conceive that women can care about voting. That some women do care has been proved by the Petition presented to Parliament last session. There are now a very considerable number of open minded unprejudiced people, who see no particular reason why women should not have votes, if they want them, but, they ask, what would be the good of it? What is there that women want which male legislators are not willing to give? ...The claim is made.. on the general ground that under a representative government any class which is not represented is likely to be neglected... That a want of due

¹⁵ *ibid* ED IX/ KEN 1

¹⁶ NAPSS Transactions, October 1866.

consideration for the interests of women is apparent in our legislation, could very easily be shown.¹⁷

2. The Petition.

It is not clear exactly when Barbara Bodichon presented her paper to the Kensington Society, but it was at the beginning of May 1866 that the petition activity began. It is not recorded which women were present at that meeting, but thirty-five members signed the petition. These thirty-five were mainly women with previous commitment to campaigning (See Chapter Six). It could be that these were also the most active members of the society itself. However this is negated by the fact that of those twenty-five members who suggested subjects for discussion by the Society, (and were presumably keen members) thirteen did sign and twelve did not. Therefore it seems that this group of exceptionally educated and experienced women were equally split on the issue of suffrage. Among the women who did not sign are three who are on record as having been canvassers, Mrs Heaton, Mrs Gurney and Miss Jane Crow. Until her husband died, Mrs Gurney preferred to give her support 'privately'.

Barbara Bodichon and Helen Taylor both wrote to each other on 9th May, and it is not clear which was the letter which initiated the campaign. From the offices of the English Woman's Journal Barbara Bodichon wrote:

I am very anxious to have some conversation with you about the possibility of doing something towards getting women votes. I should not like to start a petition or make any movement without knowing what you and Mr J.S. Mill thought expedient at this time. I have only just arrived in London from Algiers but have already seen many ladies who are willing to take some steps for this cause. Miss Boucherett, who is here, puts down twenty-five pounds at once for expenses. I shall be every day this week at these offices at 3. Would you write a petition which you could bring with you. I myself would propose to try simply for what we are most likely to get.¹⁸

Helen Taylor's letter of the same date states surprisingly modestly:

¹⁷ Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women. A Paper read at the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, October 1866. Reprinted in Candida Ann Lacey ed Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group [Women's Source Library] New York and London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1987. The editor omits to give full details of the sources of the documents printed in this volume. This is especially unfortunate as the Transactions of the NAPSS did not include this paper.

¹⁸London School of Economics, Mill Taylor Papers. Vol. XII 40-105

I do not think less than 100 [signatures] would be enough. Anything more than that would seem to me very satisfactory. I see no reason why the signatures should be confined to those who would profit by the plan if carried out. It would be perfectly proper for all women to ask for the franchise for those among them who can fulfil the conditions at present demanded of all men, just as men who are not seven pound householders petition in favour of the present reform bill... I am afraid we cannot expect to get many influential names, but this would not be of much importance if numbers could be got....I will send you what I can prepare in the way of a petition as soon as it is ready.¹⁹

On 11th May, Barbara Bodichon replied:

In case you should not be able to meet us here today or tomorrow I write to thank you for your letter which has given us great pleasure to receive. As soon as you send us the petition, which I have no doubt we shall all approve of we can begin to collect signatures. I have no doubt that we can get 100 names of ladies of property and education easily. I do not think that we shall have any expenses for the petition nevertheless thank you for your donation. Miss Davies, Miss Parkes, Miss Boucherett, Miss Garrett, Miss Jane Crow and myself will begin at once to get signatures. I believe Miss Isa Craig would be our secretary, but she could not be asked at present as she is otherwise engaged.[she signed the petition as Mrs Knox!]

Around that time, in an undated letter, she wrote again to Helen Taylor telling her that Emily Davies, Bessie Parkes and Jessie Boucherett had pruned her draft:

Miss Davies thinks it is the best manner of proceeding, we were all much decided by her, as she has managed so admirably the educational movement... Last evening I called on Mrs Peter Taylor, who is willing to do everything in her power. Miss Garrett has lent us the drawing room of this house for any meetings and will allow all letters to be addressed here, and Miss Crow will help me.²⁰

Emily Davies, writing some thirty years later, confessed that she could not remember much about the petition, but says that she had:

A distinct recollection of a party of friends who met at Miss Garrett's house from day to day and worked it. One of the early signatures that we hailed with special delight was that of Mrs Alford, the name, the address The Deanery, Canterbury, being so highly respectable- and therefore influential...²¹

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ *ibid.* Vol XII, 43 113

²¹ Girton College, Emily Davies Papers, Family Chronicle.

However, she kept an order book, in the handwriting of Jane Crow, detailing material which had been printed for the canvass.

May 18th	1000 lithographic letters 500 'an impression B L.S.B.[odichon]
May 19th	2000 petitions B L.S B.
May 21st	1000 letters and 1000 Impression ²²

In the latter half of May canvassing was well under way. The wider canvass is discussed in detail in the last part of this chapter. There was evidence of control by key canvassers like Barbara Bodichon, who identified the strengths of particular individuals and persuaded them to use their connections to maximum effect. In one letter to Helen Taylor, Barbara Bodichon asked her to persuade Lady Amberley to get her sister to sign as well. Later she wrote:

We are getting on towards 700 names- is it not capital! I saw Mr Russell Gurney at 9 a m. The ladies all want him to present the petition, and he says he will, if Mr Mill wishes it, and will speak to Mr Mill today. I told Mr Russell Gurney that I myself would rather Mr Mill presented it, but mine is not a reason only a sentimental feeling! and as all the ladies are more conservative than I perhaps Mr Gurney is best- I think you said it was expedient to have Mr G. Is there any danger of the government going out? Please tell me if we may safely delay our petition until Monday. We can be ready by Thursday- but if we wait until Saturday we get of course more names. Friday, perhaps would be the best day. Has any notice to be given? or will any day do?²³

Helen Taylor's response is not known, but a day or so later Barbara Bodichon wrote:

We received your note and signatures last night... We have nearly 1500 signatures now and should have probably received 2000 but we limited our time. If it is now still convenient for Mr Mill to present the petition on Thursday will you write to me at Miss Garrett's saying where the petition is to meet Mr Mill. If the government is not going out and there are reasons for postponing the presentation it does not really much matter to us. Our friends all over the country are impatient because we did not give them time to get more signatures.²⁴

As the day for the presentation approached, Emily Davies confessed pleasure in the fight. Her letter was full of the attention to strategic detail which made her such a valued

²²ibid

²³London School of Economics, Mill Taylor Papers. Vol. XII, no. 52.

²⁴ibid No 53.

member of a campaign team. Already she was thinking beyond the presentation of the petition, and laying plans to maximise its impact, and discussing who would become involved in the continuing movement:

I hope Mr Gurney has undertaken to perform his part on Thursday, if Mr Mill still thinks that he can present the petition on that day. I suppose we shall hear what day the Motion is to come on, and we can arrange for members to have copies of the petition with the list of names, by that time, if it is thought advisable. I think that at any rate it would be useful to have the list for newspapers, writers etc., as we can mark the names which are most likely to influence them. ... I think there must be truth in your theory as to the peculiar fitness of women for fighting. I cannot help enjoying it. ²⁵

The next day she wrote to Helen Taylor again, planning the new suffrage committee and finalising the arrangements for the presentation of the petition to J.S. Mill. The petition, as she had predicted, was placed in his hand by herself and Elizabeth Garrett at about two o'clock on June 7th 1866

3. The Petition data

The investigation of the 1866 suffrage petition began with an enquiry into the age and marital status and class of those women who signed it. Age was discovered through the census, and occasionally through biographical dictionaries or obituaries. The former, like the latter, were sometimes affected by the traditional reluctance of older women to tell their age. The age of two thirds of Kensington Society members and less than one sixth of 'suffrage petition women' was discovered. The complete membership list of the Kensington Society revealed that twenty of its members were married and forty-nine were single. Most women omitted their title when signing the petition, but from that and a range of other sources, marital status, (or at least the title which women chose to use) was found for more than one third of the women. For both groups, definition of class was difficult. A well documented example of this was Frances Power Cobbe, whose father was a substantial Irish landowner. He decided that on his death his daughter's income should be such that she should remain dependent on her brothers if she wished to maintain her upper class lifestyle. In the event, she chose to take her own small inheritance and

²⁵ibid. Vol XIII, No. 174.

work as a part time journalist to supplement it. Indeed she perceived herself to be a member of the upper classes, and still retained her circle of well to do acquaintances even when her own financial circumstances were less lavish. The independent working women, and the experience of female heads of household in particular have their place in Chapter Five, Part 2, where their occupations are examined, in the context of shared 'experience' which might form a feminist perspective.

The 1866 suffrage petition includes signatures of women living in England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland. Five British-born women living abroad, in Italy, India and France also signed, as did at least three Americans resident for some years in England. (Charlotte Cushman the actress, Sarah Parker Remond, the African-American lecturer, and the playwright and actress Maria Anne Lovell). Two cities, London and Manchester, provided many signatures, but over 900 women lived in locations which ranged from a small isolated hamlet like Collier Street in rural Kent, (where three women signed), to Birmingham, (where again only three women signed). Size or location does not appear to have affected the number of signatures, whilst the presence of particular types of people, with very specific experiences, does. The petition was collected in a short space of time, but this was also true of other petitions, where many more signatures were collected, in single towns or cities. Later petitions supporting women's suffrage were of this type, and many hundreds of signatures were regularly collected for these. It could be argued that those large petitions are a better barometer of the geographical distribution of support. They certainly deal in numbers which are far more significant when measuring the national response, and regional commitment. Where the 1866 petition is unique is that it can reveal the processes by which a petition was collected, and the *origins from which later support grew*, and what that support was when the issue was very new and clearly contentious. A signature to this petition was a public act, since names and addresses were to be published, not only to MPs but also to the press. Yet in thirty seven places a lone woman was prepared for her neighbourhood to know that she had signed. In sixty other places a few more women signed, but fewer than ten. Many of these isolated women did not go on to support suffrage publicly again. Some went on to canvas and collect subscriptions for the rest of their lives. In some towns or villages, there is one woman who can be identified as the canvasser, linked to other canvassers and through them to the instigators by links which are not geographical, but which fundamentally affect the geographical spread of support.

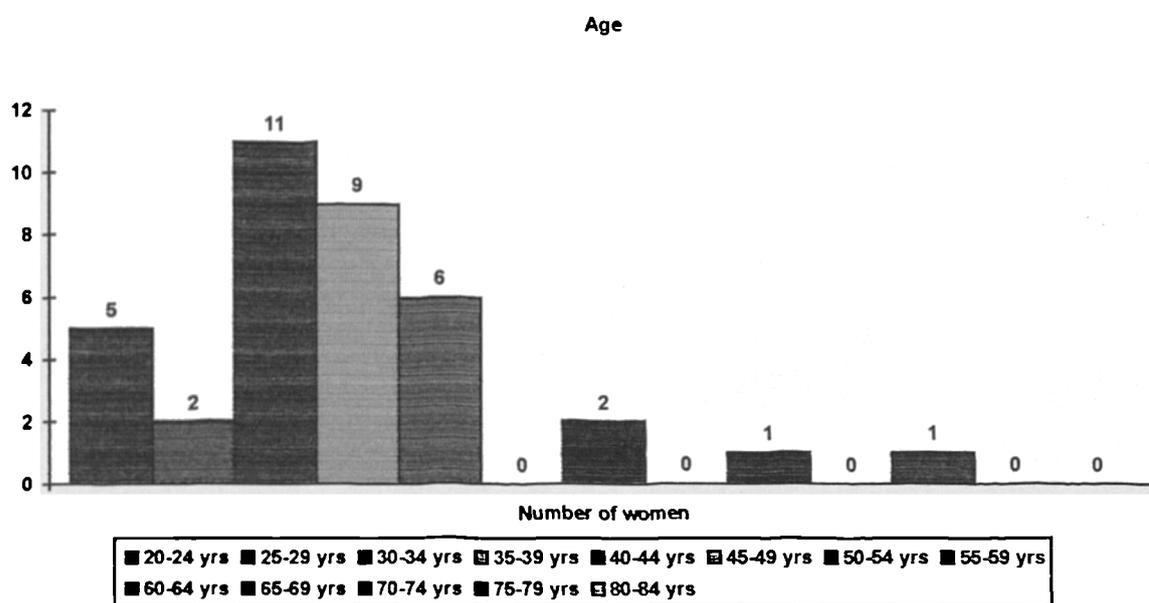
This chapter examines the distribution of support across the British Isles in late May and early June 1866 and the networks of connections which were used to discover

and activate such support. The initial target for this petition was just 100 signatures, and fifteen times that number were collected, in 119 different places.

3a. Age of Kensington Society members and of a sample of women who signed the 1866 Suffrage petition.

As can be seen from Chart 4a, the overwhelming majority of Kensington Society members were aged between thirty and forty-five, with only a handful of older members. The ages of thirty-seven of the members are known. Thirty-three of these were under forty-five in 1866

Chart 4a. Age of 37 Kensington Society members in 1866



Members were aged from twenty years old to one widow in her seventies. There were seven members under thirty in 1866. Two of these were already married, and three, including doctors Elizabeth Garrett and Emily Bovell, married later. Seventeen, the largest number, were in their thirties. Of these, three were married, and only one other married later. Most of the activists involved in either Langham Place projects, the education or employment campaigns were in this group. They were also involved in the earliest formation of the suffrage societies, which were the occasion for their first working together as a group, though it was one which fractured quite quickly. This group of influential individuals included Dorothea Beale, Barbara Bodichon, Jessie Boucherett, Frances Buss, Jane Crow, Emily Davies and her brother's wife Mary, Annie and Eliza Kearsy, Gertrude King, Elizabeth Manning, Mary Eliza Porter, Louisa Smith, (Elizabeth

Garrett's older sister and mentor), Helen Taylor and Elizabeth Wolstenholme Elmy. Of these women, Dorothea Beale, Jane Crow and Mary Llewelyn Davies did not sign the suffrage petition, whereas for the society as a whole, fewer than half signed. All but Mary Llewelyn Davies and Louisa Smith, (both wives and mothers), had ambitions to work, or had experienced earning money. It is this core group which featured prominently in the sharing of commitment, both of campaigning and education, and they will be discussed in Chapter Six in more detail. Only eight members were over forty, though their number included such influential and supportive women as Frances Power Cobbe, Charlotte Manning and Anna Swanwick.

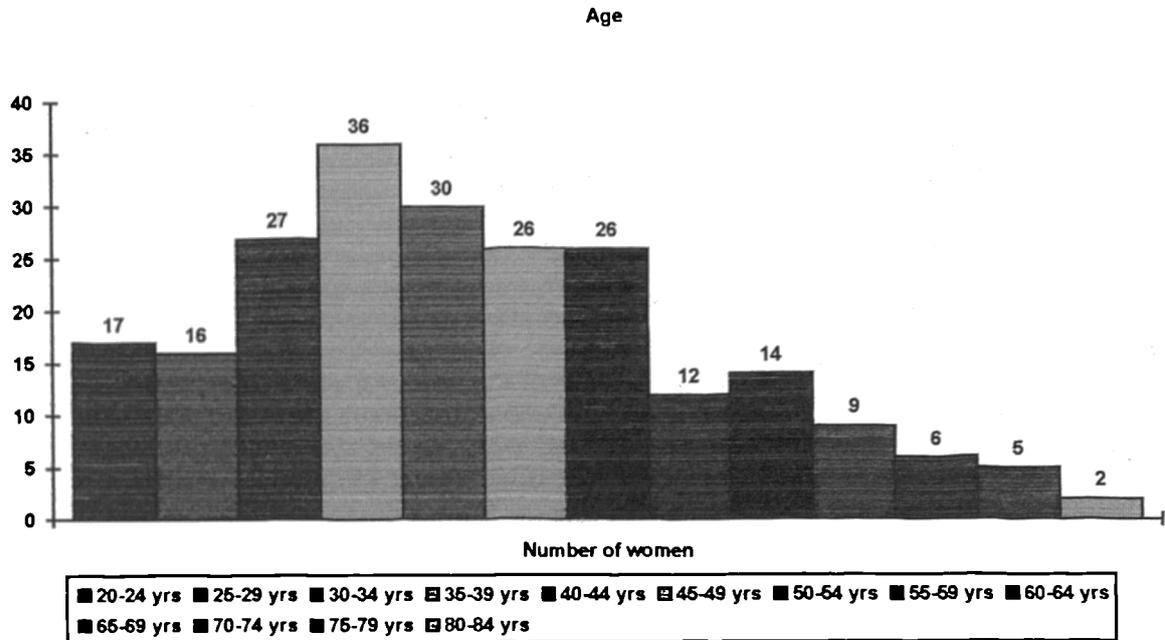
The age spread of these women draws attention to the impact of generation upon this group of women. The key group of women born between 1825 and 1835 would have moved through a particular set of events and opportunities in their life time. The drama of the 1840 anti-slavery conference exclusion of women would have occurred when they were impressionable adolescents. The opening of Queen's College, London and Bedford College occurred when they were of the age when they could attend classes. The problems of their married contemporaries were highlighted by the Married Women's Property petition of 1856, in which some had been involved. Many had joined the NAPSS, attended its Meetings, and had their projects launched under its aegis. Some had delivered papers to this audience. By 1865, if they were not married, they had either chosen not to, or had developed a comfortable single life. The younger women, including three who became doctors, Emily Bovell, Sophia Jex Blake and Elizabeth Garrett, had a different set of experiences. Garrett heard Elizabeth Blackwell lecture in the late 1850's, when her older friends, aware of their fragmentary education and age, did not feel able to take on such a strenuous personal battle, (though Elizabeth Blackwell, who did not sign the petition, was their friend and contemporary, her struggle for medical education had begun in America). Older women like Frances Power Cobbe, Charlotte Manning and Anna Swanwick had succeeded in the field of literature and journalism. Their specialisms had been developed individually, and they were proudly self educated. The core group of women in their thirties, who were also among the most well documented members of the society, were those whom historians have considered as a group of like minded friends. However, when shared experience is examined, the distinction between shared experience of an era, co-operative networking and an undifferentiated sisterhood becomes clearer.

Among the older members were Charlotte Manning, the President and hostess; Frances Power Cobbe and Anna Swanwick with their established literary reputations, and Miss Elizabeth Bostock, a founder of Bedford College who had actively encouraged ex-students like Annette Akroyd and Ellen Nichols to join the society. It is possible that

other, younger, ex-college students may be among those members who have not been traced, since the young teachers and governesses were least likely to appear in the records.

The sample of women who signed the petition [Chart 4b] shows them to be mainly aged between thirty and fifty-five, with significant numbers of younger and much older women

Chart 4b. Age of 226 women who signed the Suffrage Petition in 1866

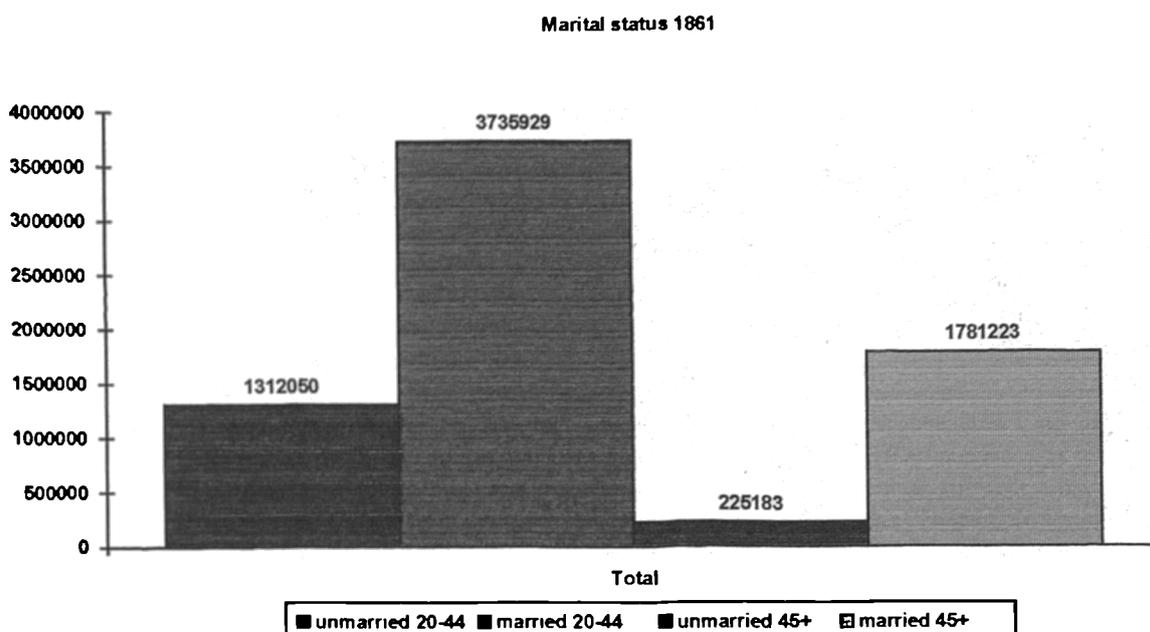


Here one hundred women were over forty-five, while there were 126 younger women. The reasons for the contrast with the Kensington Society sample may purely be that far more information exists about the Kensington Society members than about the others. It may be that the focus of canvassing was the older woman householder. Or it may be that younger women are more typically those 'lost' to the record, mobile, and living in lodgings, or small schools, or as governesses or dependent relatives.

3b. Marital status of Kensington Society members and a sample of women who signed the Suffrage petition.

The 1861 census showed again that there were a number of women who never married, the so-called 'redundant' women who caused so much concern. Chart 4c shows the total numbers of single and married women, in England and Wales, between the ages of twenty and forty-four, and over forty-five in that year.

Chart 4c. Marital status according to the 1861 Census



Of the seventy Kensington Society members listed,²⁶ forty-nine were single women and twenty-one married or widowed. Further research revealed that at least six of the single women married later. Of those six, three were aged between twenty and thirty, and one (Elizabeth Wolstenholme) was over thirty in 1866. Among the single women at least sixteen are known never to have married. Of the twenty-one married members, two were widows, two were known to have young children, and two were never mothers. Little is known about the other fifteen. When all three charts, (4d Kensington Society members, 4e, Those members who signed the suffrage petition, and 4f the sample of women who signed the suffrage petition) are compared with Chart 4c, (which is based on 1861 census data²⁷) there are clear differences. In the census, both groups contain many more married women than single women, whereas in the three samples of 'feminist'

²⁶ Girton College, Emily Davies Papers, ED, IX, Ken 1.

²⁷ Lee Holcombe *Wives and property: reform of the Married Women's Property law in nineteenth century England*. Toronto. University of Toronto Press, 1983.

women, young single women are in the majority. The Kensington Society has a majority of single women under forty-five, and when those members who supported the suffrage petition are isolated, again more than half are shown to have been younger single women.

Chart 4d Marital status of Kensington Society members in 1865

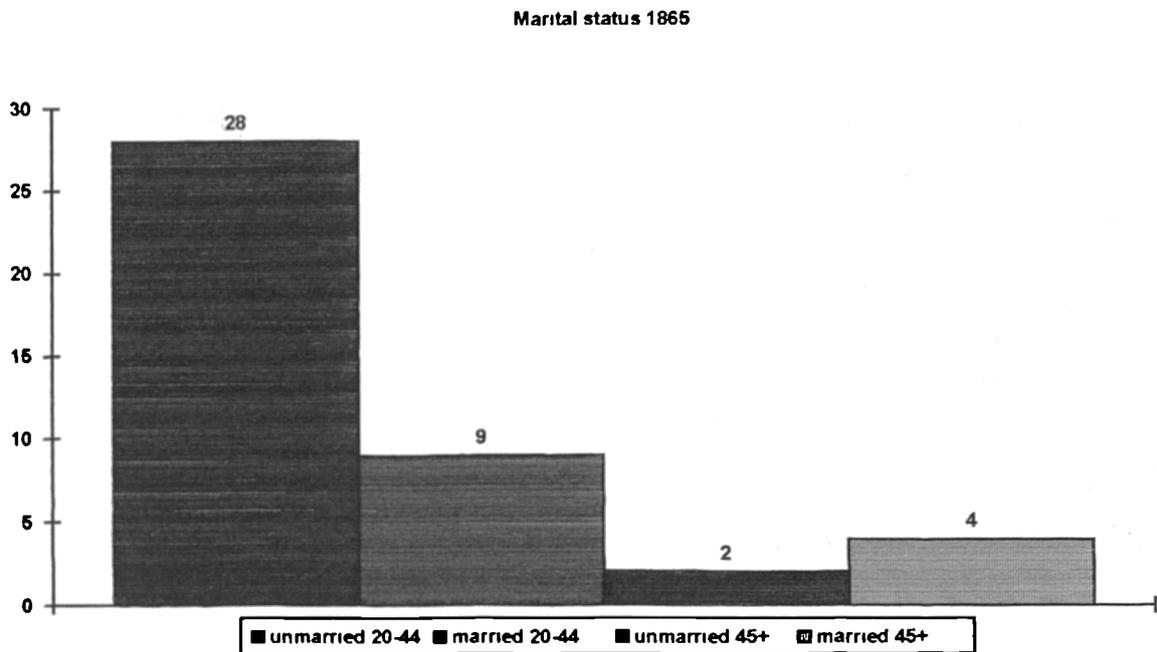
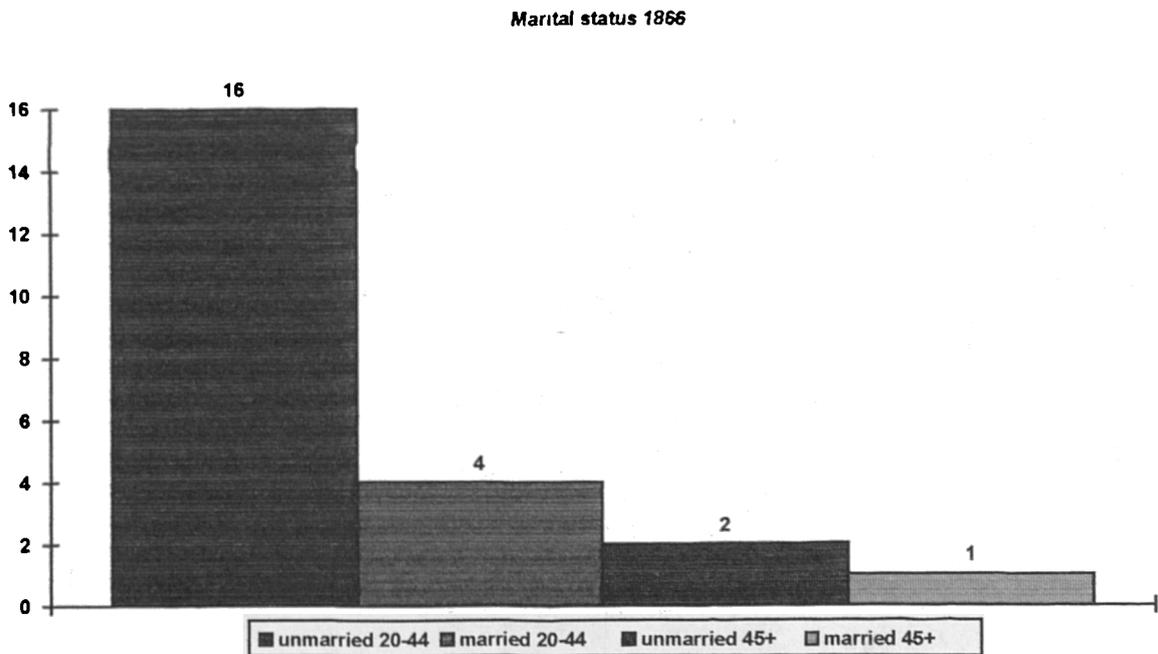
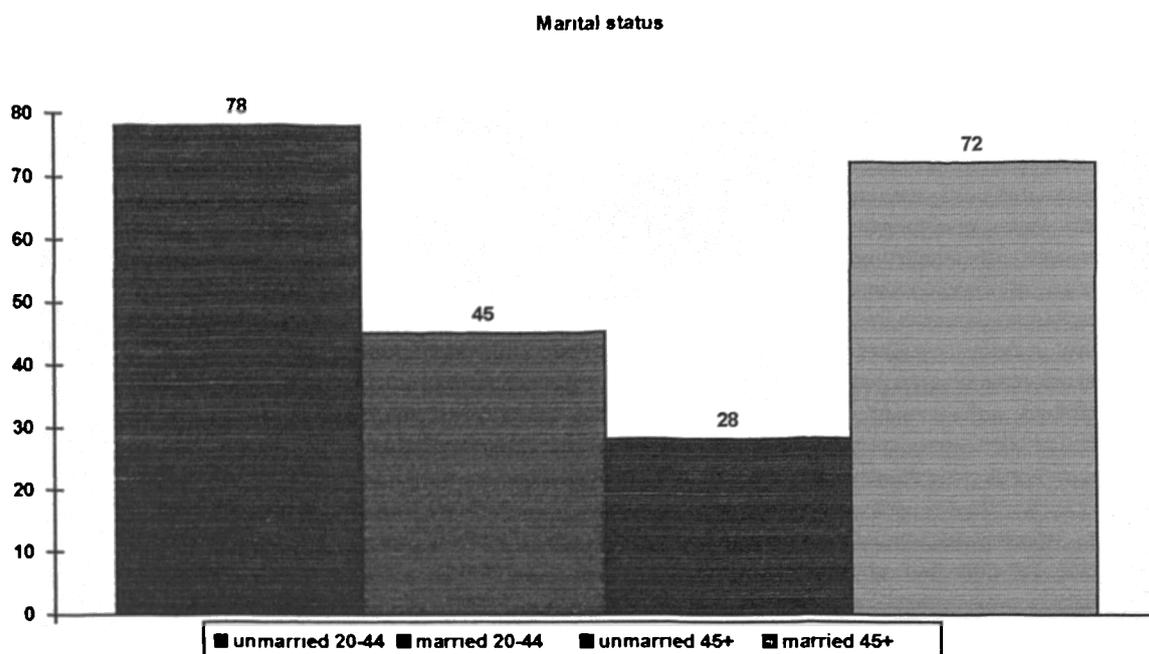


Chart 4e Marital status of Kensington Society members who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition



When the two Kensington Society samples are compared with those who signed the petition there are interesting variations to this pattern. Here older married women are slightly less likely than younger single women to support suffrage.

Chart 4f. Marital status of women for which this information is available 1866 Suffrage petition.

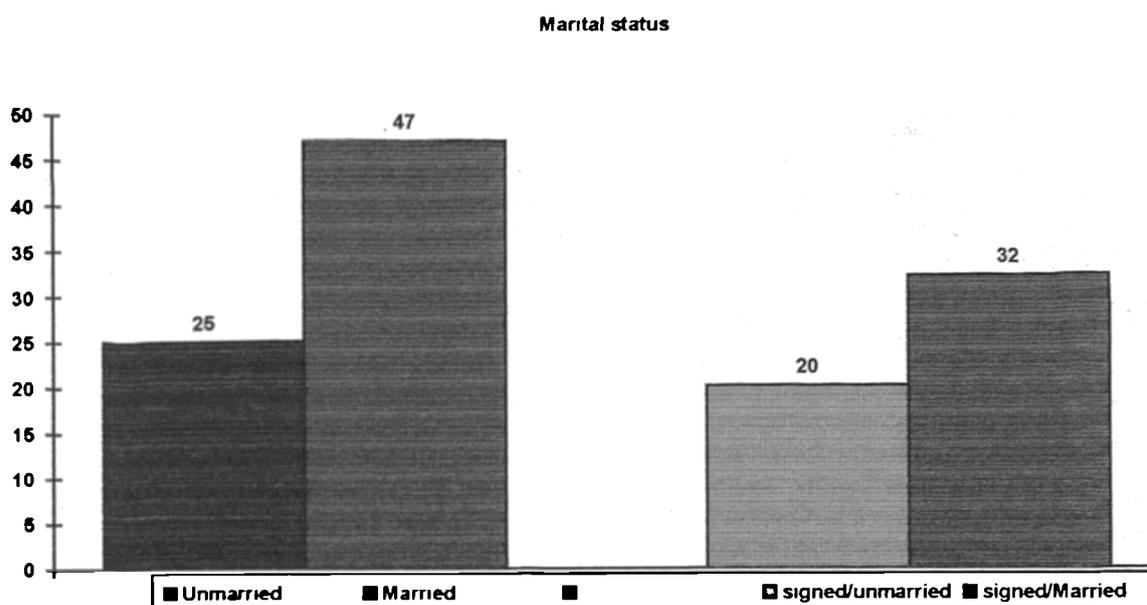


As well as a very large number of single women of all ages, and a far smaller than national average number of young married women, there is a much higher than average number of married women aged over forty-five. Why should the predominantly single, younger women of the Kensington Society canvass such a comparatively large number of older married women in addition to those single women of their own age? The older married women included widows, and the arguments put forward by Barbara Bodichon in her suffrage pamphlet laid emphasis on the plight of the widowed head of household who was disadvantaged by being disenfranchised. This evidence of marital status appears to support the argument that the young single activists who predominated in the society, but who dominated the society's pro-suffrage members canvassed amongst older widowed or married women who were particularly disadvantaged without the vote.²⁸

²⁸It was not possible to establish how many women in all were widowed. However it was possible to identify 128 women whose husbands were alive, and fifty-four who were widowed, or at least heads of household with husband absent. It was impossible to establish the status of a further 115 women who were married

In July 1867 the balance sheets of receipts and expenditure for the Enfranchisement of Women Committee recorded the names of the ninety people who had subscribed since October 1866.²⁹ This was a mixed list, with eighteen men, twenty-five single women, and forty-seven married women subscribers (including two married couples.). Among those were thirteen members of the Kensington Society³⁰, and a further thirty-six women who had previously signed the suffrage petition. As can be seen from chart 4g, far more married than single women subscribed.

Chart 4g. Marital status of women who subscribed to the Enfranchisement of Women Committee October 1866-July 1867.



This also applied to the thirteen Kensington Society members, where only six single women subscribed to the committee, alongside seven married members. Among the women who had also signed the suffrage petition the difference became even more marked, with only eleven single subscribers as against twenty-four married subscribers. Two Kensington Society subscribers, Louisa Smith ³¹and Alice Westlake were named as joint subscribers with their husbands. As can be seen, the balance between married and single supporters of suffrage more nearly reflects the proportions of married and single

²⁹The Clark Archive. Street Somerset. Priestman Papers. Misc. Pol. Enfranchisement of Women Committee, Balance Sheet of receipts and expenditure. October 1866-July 1867. [I am grateful to Sandra Holton for drawing my attention to this document.]

³⁰Including Mrs Russell Gurney, who had not signed the suffrage petition. Her husband had since died, and she felt able to come out in public support.

³¹Louisa Smith, Elizabeth Garret's sister, died during the year, so her husband's support was particularly significant

women in the wider community according to the 1861 census. Bearing in mind that at organising and rank and file level this had not been the case in June 1866, it was a dramatic shift as the suffrage campaign moved into its formally organised phase.

3c. The Social Origins and Occupational Class of Kensington Society members and the women who signed the 1866 Suffrage Petition

Definition of social class is difficult at any historical period, and never more so than in the early and mid-nineteenth century, when the middle class was defining itself in relation to the upper class and the working class. The middling classes were developing a very complex system of signs defining position within their ranks. The upper levels of the working classes and the lower levels of the middle classes were inextricably enmeshed, and struggling to extricate themselves from this ambiguous entanglement. At the same time individuals in families were upwardly or downwardly mobile as a result of personal achievement or fate. The situation was further complicated by marriages, professionalisation of occupations, success and failure of business. Individuals, as is demonstrated in the novels of the period, (for example Cranford and Middlemarch to name but two) were aware of their own place within a finely gradated scale of class. In this study the problem of sorting out the class of the participants is compounded by the range of sources used, and the subjects themselves. In some sources, for example biographical dictionaries, professional registers and the Census, the job or profession of the subject or their male relative is named. In others, such as street directories, entries are classified into Gentry and Business and professional, or Private residents and Business. This classification was useful to the contemporary advertiser or user, but not for the purposes of this study. The subjects were all women, and thus their class was most usually defined by reference to a male relative. This was problematic enough without the complication that many women did not have an obvious male relative, and that when they did, this relative might be father, brother, husband or son, making accurate assessment difficult. Olive Banks in Becoming a feminist³² used a crude classification: (gentry, professional, business, working class) which she herself found inadequate for the classification of women.

The purpose of this part of the investigation was to establish the background and shared experience of the women who belonged to the Kensington Society and to examine

³²Olive Banks Becoming a feminist: The social origins of 'first wave' feminism. Athens Georgia, University of Georgia Press, 1986.

whether women whose support they called on were from similar or different backgrounds. The presence of a man in the household might not necessarily mean that the woman was totally dependent. Two cases illustrate the complexity of discovering social origin and its impact on individual women. Ellen Nichols was a 'country' member of the Kensington Society. Her father was either a physician or a pharmacist, her mother was dead, and she had two younger brothers. Ellen Nichols not only kept house for her father, and taught her younger brother, but she also worked virtually full time as a visiting governess. She wrote of her father working, yet she was clearly making a vital financial contribution to the household. She gave no indication of having chosen to work, but rather expressed concern if one of her employers failed her. She wrote of her brother being sent to school, and it might have been this expense that necessitated her earning, for necessity it clearly was. Sarah Jennings, Principal of a Ladies School, signed the petition, and was also at the first meeting of the LAS. Born in 1819, her household appeared in both the 1861 and 1871 census. On both occasions her husband Ebenezer was listed as head of household. In 1861 he worked at Messrs Gurney's Office, Parliamentary reporters. In 1871 he was an 'extra clerk' at the Colonial Office. In that year her twenty-two year old son worked for the Civil Service Commission. Meanwhile at home in 1861, Mrs Jennings had a French and a German teacher, and seven girl pupils living in, as well as a cook and housemaid, (both in their teens). By 1871 her nineteen year old daughter had joined her as a teacher. The staff was completed by an English and a French teacher and two young servants. Her fourteen pupils ranged in age from eight to sixteen, and came from as far away as Halifax and Glamorgan. In both these cases the earning power of the woman in an apparently respectable middle class household appeared to have played an essential part in its maintenance. In the Jennings household this was so for at least ten years.

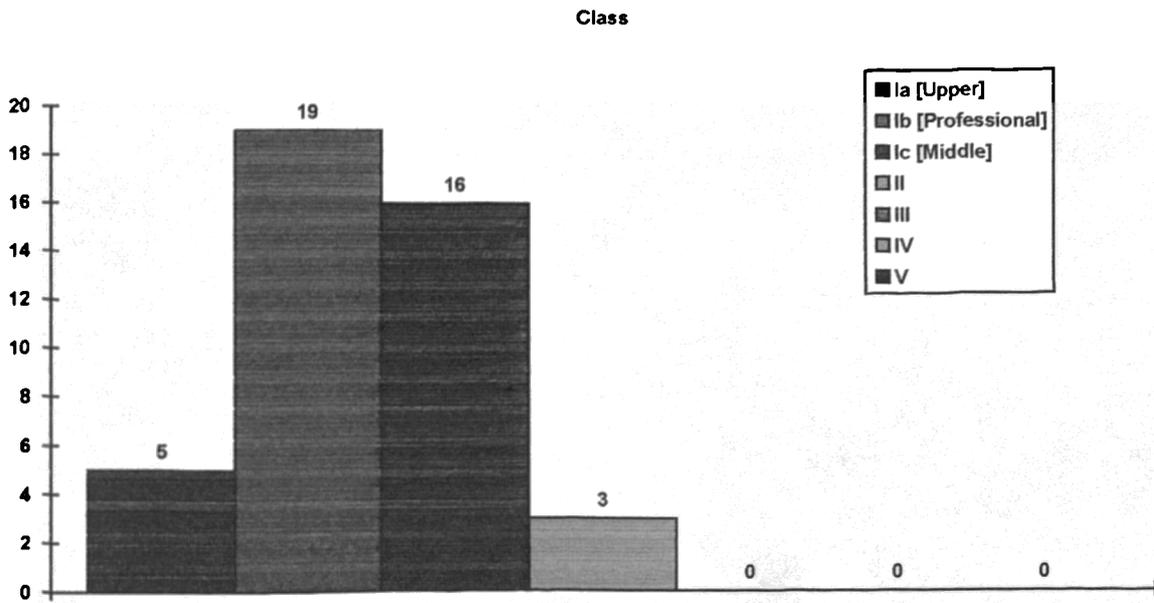
The attempt at analysis of social origin, and its meaning in the context of the early women's movement was approached with caution. The exceptions and contradictions were perhaps more illuminating than the crude overall picture. The occupational class scale used in the 1911 census has been used by J.A.Banks to establish the social structure of nineteenth century England.³³ The main problem of this scheme is that there was only one category which covered the middle and upper classes of society. In this investigation, group I has been subdivided into three: 1a. Landowners, gentry and aristocracy. 1b. Professionals (i.e. Lawyers, clergy, doctors and army and navy officers.) and 1c. the rest.

³³ in Richard Lawton, ed. The Census and social structure, and interpretative guide to nineteenth century censuses for England and Wales London, Frank Cass 1978.

see also E.A.Wrigley, ed. Nineteenth-century society. Essays in the quantitative methods for the study of social data. Cambridge, Cambridge University Press 1972.

This cannot be totally satisfactory, since in the latter group are included business people who may have been very well-to-do and politically active, like the Malleon family, who were distillers. The families of MPs, for example the Bright connection, have been placed in the Professional group, where more specific information of occupation was not available (though they are most likely to be from branches of the upper classes).

Chart 4h Family background of forty-three Kensington Society members



The members of the Kensington Society came from families which were almost without exception in group Ia, Ib, or Ic. The occupations of male relatives of Kensington Society members were as follows. Seven husbands, brothers or fathers were in business, including drapery and distilling. All these were large or successful businesses. The Garretts, for example, lived in a substantial house, well away from the site of Newsom Garrett's business. His eldest daughter, Louisa, though married to a draper, lived in a prosperous street, with no evidence of the trade being carried on in the premises. When he died in 1869 Annette Akroyd's father left his six or seven children £10,000 each.

Six of the women had male family members who were lawyers. These included Mrs Charlotte Manning, and her step-daughter Adelaide Manning, who lived in a substantial detached house in Kensington. Four women had male relatives who were educators. These ranged from School Inspector and Inquiry Commissioner to tutor in a private school. The tutor was a partner with his wife running a small boys' school. Another headmaster and school proprietor was Septimus Buss, father of Frances Buss,

who independently ran her own girls' school in partnership with her mother. Four parents were landowners, including Jessie Boucherett's father who was Lord of the Manor at Willingham. Later her elder sister inherited the title, and used this as evidence of her qualification for franchise in later suffrage campaigns. Frances Power Cobbe's wealthy father has already been mentioned.

Three clerical fathers, brothers and husbands included Emily Davies' father and brother, both Church of England ministers. The Christian Socialist Llewelyn Davies was married to Kensington Society member Mary (who had recently given birth to Margaret Llewelyn Davies, a key figure in later years in the Women's Co-operative movement.) The father of Annie and Eliza Keary had a Church of England living provided by his wife's family, after the failure of his army career. After the death of their parents the Keary sisters lived in a charming semi-detached gothic house in Kensington, and do not seem to have depended on their writing for a living. Though both sisters earned money by writing, they were closely enmeshed in the lives of their male family members. Annie looked after her brother's young children in the four year interval between his two marriages. The two sisters nursed their father between 1854-1856, and the 1871 census show the sisters caring for four little cousins whose parents "were obliged to leave them in England whilst they returned to India"³⁴ They also did voluntary work with Sisters in an East London children's hospital, helped at the Servants' Home in Bessborough Gardens and taught at Clementia Taylor's Aubrey Institute in Kensington. In spite of this selfless lifestyle Annie was critical of the influence which men had over women's lives:

I always feel that women may be so much more yet than they have ever been, but they will not, if men continue to insist that they should always conform strictly to one type ³⁵

Thus two women who were from the professional levels of the middle classes experienced the vicissitudes of being middle class; changes in fortune, changes of profession, moving around the country and at the same time of being middle class women (the expectation that they should be responsible for the care of brothers, fathers, brothers children, relatives children, without any sensitivity to their own needs or feelings). They also wrote, again a middle class occupation. Eliza writes that her sister exercised:

³⁴ Eliza H. Keary. Memoirs of Annie Keary. London. Macmillan and Co., 1883. p.102

³⁵ *ibid.* p.91.

Her newly discovered gift of writing. But everything she did was inspired by or turned towards what was the centre of her life- her care of [her brother's] children.³⁶

Two women, including financially independent Barbara Bodichon, were related to doctors. One MP (Russell Gurney), one civil servant/ MP and economist (John Stuart Mill), one dead General, and one agent complete the number of solidly middle class (known) male relatives. However, five of the women for whom no male relative has been discovered were school headmistresses. These included Dorothea Beale. They were to an extent independent of male defined social status. Ellen Nichols contributed to the family income of her pharmacist father, possibly funding the education of her younger brothers. Several more of the members of the society may have been, like her, ex-college pupils now working as teachers or governesses, whose families could easily be less well to do. The members were clearly drawn from the professional middle classes. When the women themselves are considered, a different picture emerges. A large proportion of the women were self supporting, or of independent means, or lived in all female households, or in households with a female head

Group II was described as 'intermediate' between middle and working class. The three Kensington Society members in that occupational group were from the more 'respectable' end of that continuum. Emily Bovell's³⁷ widowed mother was a lodging house keeper, but her lodgers were pupils at Queen's College, London. Sophia Dobson Collet³⁸ lived with her widowed mother. Mary Eliza Porter³⁹ was the daughter of a Chelsea bookseller and she became a student at Queen's College. The family background of the members of the Kensington Society who have been traced is comfortably middle class, except for two daughters of widows and one bookseller's daughter, and a daily governess

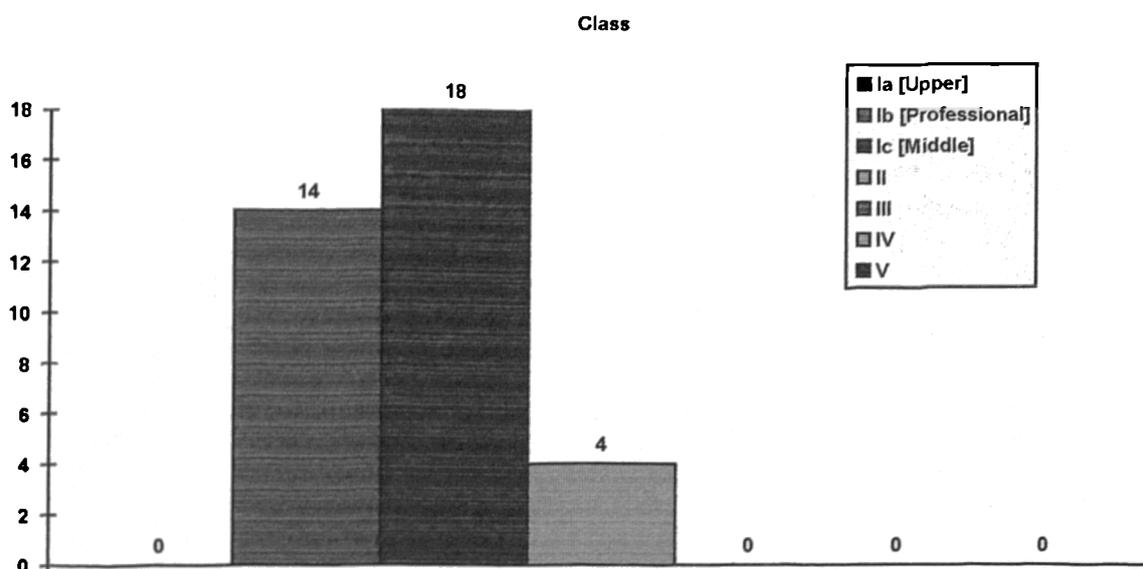
³⁶ibid p 102

³⁷ Emily Bovell. Educated at Queen's College London. Trained at Edinburgh as a doctor in the group which included Sophia Jex Blake, another Kensington Society Member. Married William Allen Sturge, M D who was a cousin of the Clark, Impy and Bright families.

³⁸ Sophia Dobson Collet. Wrote for the Spectator (According to Katherine Hare in her letter to Helen Taylor) Wrote books on Indian Theism and G D. Holyoake. Her relationship with his colleague Collet Dobson Collet is unclear, but he could have been her father. Her books were published by Alexander Strahan, who also published Bessie Parkes' work. His sister signed the Suffrage Petition. Sophia Dobson Collet died in April 1894.

³⁹ Mary Eliza Porter. 1836-? Went to Queen's College London. Became principal of School for Training Governesses, Bolham, Tiverton, where she went to work as a teacher in 1858. In 1864 she was setting up her own school in Gateshead. First headmistress of first G.P.D.S.C. school at Chelsea, and Principal of Bedford School for Girls among others. Finally Head of Bradford Grammar School for Girls. In 1871 she stood for Gateshead School Board, but was not elected.

Chart 4i. Occupations of thirty-seven Kensington Society members who worked at some period of their life.



When the occupations of these women themselves are examined, a slight shift occurs in the occupational class. The working middle class woman had an ambiguous status, for just this reason, that her employment opportunities did not include the middle class professions. In 1865, just under half the Kensington Society members had earned money at some time during their lives. Some were completely self supporting, others had worked for periods of time, others again had been paid for creative work which they had done at home. Still other members had embarked on the early stages of careers which were to give them full time employment in later life.

Ten members were full time school Principals, either as proprietors of their own schools like Frances Buss at North London Collegiate, or employed by governors like Dorothea Beale at Cheltenham Ladies College. (Dorothea Beale did not sign the petition) The responsibility involved in their work is indicated in the evidence that seven of them gave to the Taunton Commission⁴⁰. These were women at the top of their profession, who founded or managed large, reputable schools and governess training institutions. Two more were running schools or colleges by 1872. Two more members were teaching at Queen's College, London, and one was working as a daily governess. Other governess and teacher members may have been lost because of the problems of locating them. Twenty one members, some of whom gave addresses which were schools at this time, could have been students, teachers or governesses like Ellen Nichols. One, Barbara

⁴⁰ Schools Inquiry Commission 1867-8 Minutes of evidence London, HMSO, 1868.

Bodichon, had founded and run a mixed 'progressive' day school, Portman Hall, for a while. Another younger member later taught as a volunteer at the Working Women's College. Since several of these teachers gave evidence to the Taunton Commission at the time that they were members, detailed information about their work is available.⁴¹

Four women had experience of journalism. Frances Power Cobbe was a salaried staff reporter on the *Echo*, with her own office, working two days a week. Isa Craig was employed to edit the *English Woman's Journal*, Sophia Dobson Collet wrote for the *Spectator*, and Mme. Ronniger edited the *Aesthetic Review*. Two members had published novels, and two had written history books. Yet another was an essayist. Four more had published, or were to publish, poetry, biography or educational books. Other members had articles published, which were often anonymous, and may not have been paid for. Four women had part time or full time jobs as paid secretaries of organisations, including Isa Craig and Gertrude King, secretary of SPEW. Two members had performed in public, one in provincial theatre (Helen Taylor), the other giving literary readings. Barbara Bodichon was a successful exhibited artist.

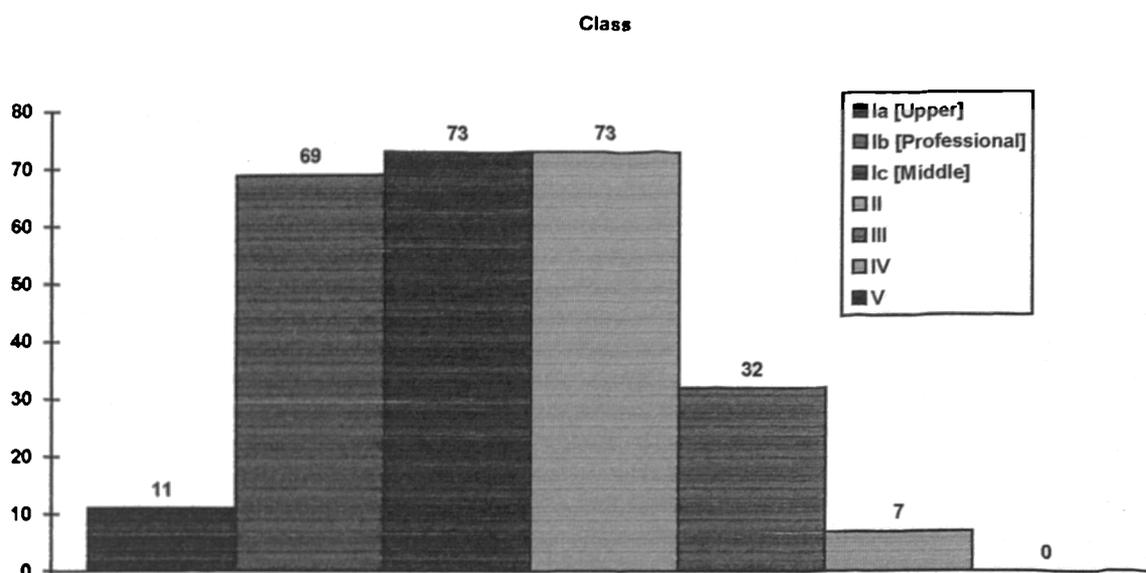
In the future, three members were to achieve a medical education, and practice full time as doctors. They were Elizabeth Garrett, Sophia Jex Blake, (who was in America in 1866, and did not sign the petition) and Emily Bovell (At this point in time, Emily Bovell was teaching). Another, a college student, was later to become a student at Girton College. In chart 4i the women were simply placed in the occupational class to which their own efforts consigned them. These efforts shifted them slightly downward in the classification of occupation. This was mainly of interest when compared with the results of the same comparison for the women who signed the suffrage petition. It became clear that, with more than half of the members with experience of work, this group of exclusively middle class women was very unusual. When the women whom they canvassed were examined it became clear that Kensington Society members looked for, and found, support beyond their own class and range of occupations.

When examining the social origins of the women who signed the Suffrage Petition, information was available about the occupation of male relatives of 265 women, and for the occupations of 243 women who worked. These categories are not necessarily mutually exclusive, either when the family background of a woman who worked is known,

⁴¹ *ibid* Vol. XIV South Western Division: Devon, Bolham near Tiverton, School for training Governesses. digest of information. pp. 532-538.
Digest of evidence Thursday 30th November. Miss Emily Davics. pp. 232-252.
14th March. Miss Mary Eliza Porter. pp. 625-632.

or where both partners worked, but overlap is rare. Each chart can be taken separately, and comparison does present some problems. However some information, for example the large number of women who were teaching, is not materially affected by the differences in nature between the two groups of data.

Chart 4j. Family background of 265 women who signed the suffrage petition.



The occupations of relations of 265 women who signed the Suffrage petition are known. In Class Ia there were 11 from the families of landowners. In the professional Class Ib there were twenty-two family members of clergy, eleven of doctors and eleven of lawyers, as well as five relatives of army and three of naval officers. This is quite similar to the Kensington Society sample, though there was only one officer's widow. There were also seventeen women related to men who at one time or another had been Members of Parliament. Among the newer professions represented were a surveyor, a homeopathic chemist, an inventor, and a telegraphic scientist. Eight women came from the families of artists and two from authors' families. Two were related to school inspectors and seventeen to teachers. Relatives of nine women were employed in clerical or Civil Service jobs. Among business people were family members of three large manufacturers, and eight related to distillery or brewery owners. One woman was the wife of a Chief Constable. Class II, the intermediate class bridging middle and 'respectable' working class contained around twenty-three occupations. Only five of these had five or more women family members each. These were printers and publishers (11), grocers (8), booksellers (7) butchers (6) and stationers (6). One grocer, Mr William Lane, whose shop was in the Strand, in central London, had no fewer than five women who signed at his address. Five

women were connected with farmers. Among other occupations at the middle class level, were the families of two musicians, a garden designer, an Anti-Corn Law lecturer, and Isa Craig Knox's ⁴² husband, a coal dealer. Other food shops and two coffee houses, luxury goods businesses, like milliners, perfumiers and watchmakers, and everyday shops such as drapers and tobacconists were home to the rest of the women in this occupation group.

The class of a plaster figure maker, a pottery dealer and a heating apparatus maker were difficult to place. In the third occupational class were crafts people, ranging from piano makers, cabinet makers and a wood carver to a plasterer, a stonemason, a house painter, and a plumber, and crafts associated with horses. In class IV were coopers, a glover, collar maker, warehouse keeper and paper maker. The men who were actually living with the women, (rather than parents who might confer class from a distance or the husbands of widows) may have approved of their wives', daughters' and mothers' decision to support suffrage. Of the 265 women considered here, only around thirty were not living in the home with the male family member. Elizabeth French's comment is apposite:

I doubt if I ever knew a woman who dared do so much as sign a petition without the approbation of the men, husband or other, who determined the amount of cash she had in her purse and whose temper governed her.⁴³

As has been mentioned before, some reasons why women have not been traced are either that they were geographically mobile, or that they were living within the households of people who did not share their surname, or that they married and changed their name. The first two of these reasons can also carry with them the implication that they were less financially secure than the women who have been traced. In assessing the occupational class of these missing women, circumstantial evidence, for example the present occupation of people living at their address, often suggested that the 'missing women' were more likely to be in occupational classes II, III, IV or V. They may also have been teachers or governesses employed in schools, whose lack of security of employment, and whose poor remuneration would indicate that they might be in 'education service' (class II) rather than 'teachers' (Class Ic.)⁴⁴ These missing women have not been included in the calculations.

⁴²Isa Craig, later Mrs Knox, b. 1831 married her cousin, a coal dealer in June 1866. Her mother in law signed the petition. She had been employed on the Waverley Journal which was used as the basis for the English Woman's Journal, and edited the latter. She was paid secretary of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science. She won prizes for her poetry.

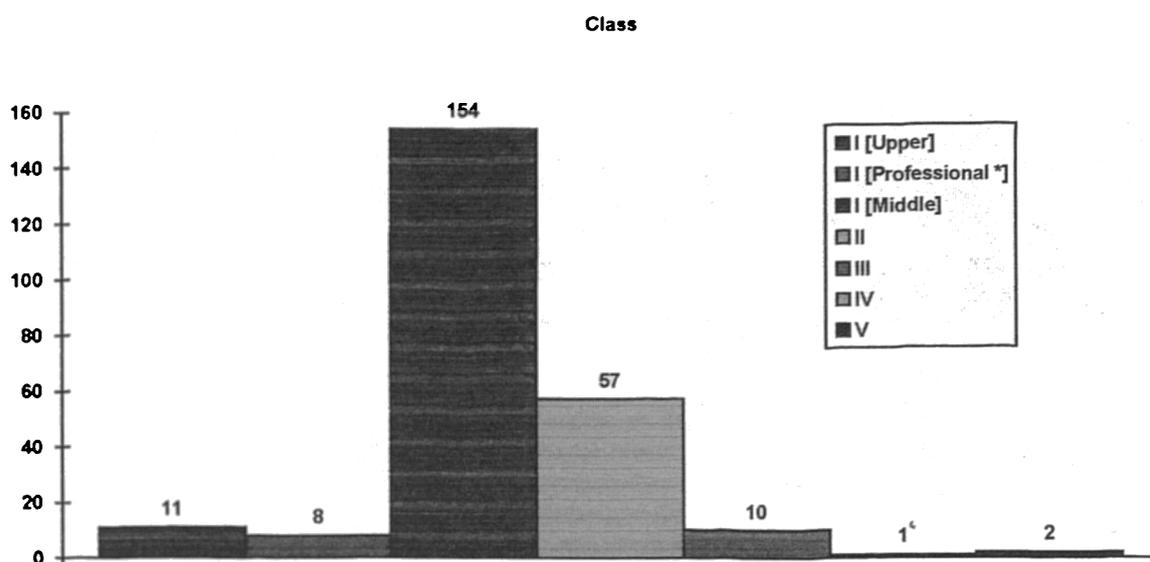
⁴³London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers Vol. XIII 198. Miss E French to Helen Taylor 1868

⁴⁴ The 1911 list of occupation classification is to be found in Richard Lawton, The Census and social structure, an interpretative guide to nineteenth century censuses for England and Wales. London, Frank Cass 1978. pp. 203-223

Even disregarding these women, there is a marked contrast between the background of the members of the Kensington Society, and the women whom they and their friends canvassed. This is particularly marked in the occupational groups II and III, where many women who signed were situated.

The occupations of women will be discussed in greater detail when shared experience is considered. Here Chart 4k showed that the women to whom the canvassers appealed were not so very different to themselves.

Chart 4k Occupational class of women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition



* Professional later occupation as Doctor or minister.

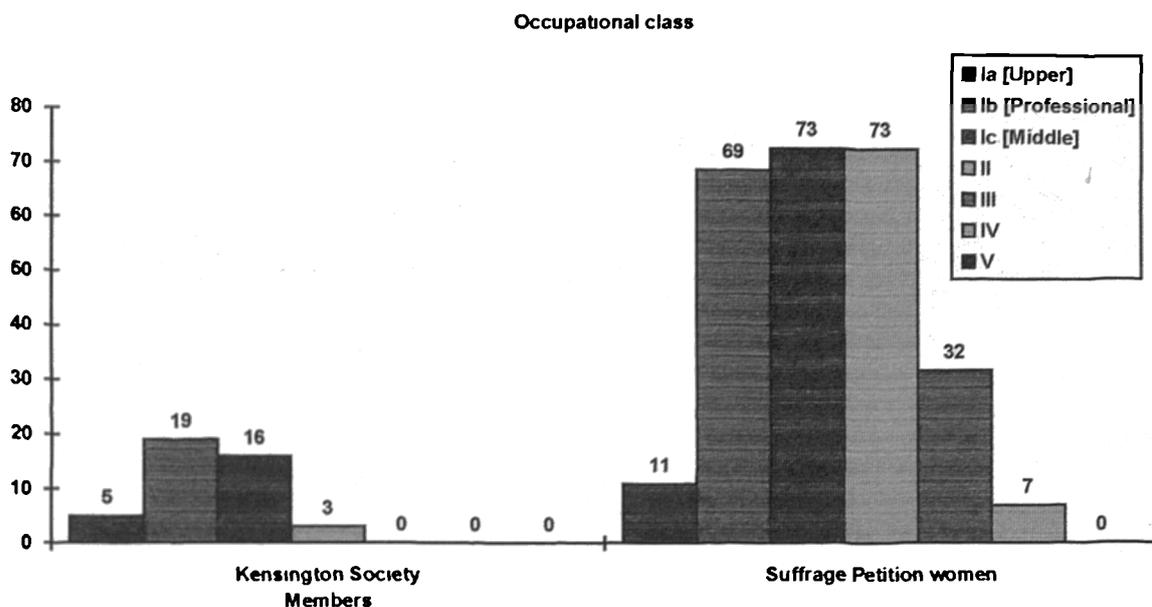
The most striking example of this was in Class Ic. Here there were 107 women who were teachers out of the total of 154. Sixty-two of these were school Principals, forty-two were teachers, and three were governesses. In the Kensington Society, thirteen of the eighteen women in that class were teachers, seven in managerial positions, and four as teachers, one as a governess, and one as a volunteer teacher. The intermediate class II contained four actresses, who had an ambiguous social position at the time, but also here, since one was Helen Taylor, who acted for a short time under an assumed name to protect her family, Mrs Maria Ann Lovell, who was also a playwright, and Mme Ronniger, who did readings, and was later a suffrage lecturer. It is difficult to believe that the fourth

actress, Matilda Hays, in spite of this career, bloomerism, 'female marriage'⁴⁵ to actress Charlotte Cushman, smoking cigars, etc. can have been anything but middle class to her Langham Place colleagues. Criticism about her that survives in comments from Anna Jameson and letters between Emily Davies and Barbara Bodichon never suggests that she was anything but a lady. The three paid secretaries in this group are also from middle class backgrounds. The five lodging house keepers include one who regularly gave hospitality to, for example, Joshua Fitch, a Schools Commissioner. The eight journalists and publishers of magazines include middle class women who needed to earn, like Eliza Lynn Linton and Frances Power Cobbe, as well as those at some time editors of The Englishwoman's Review, Howitt's Paper, The Aesthetic Review, and, of course, The English Woman's Journal. But those women at the lower end of the intermediate class II, and the rest of the working class women are from very different backgrounds. This is in contrast not only to the Kensington Society canvassers, but also to those other women with multiple commitments. They also contrast with those teachers who were so active in canvassing in their own localities, whose activities are discussed later in this chapter.

The working class supporters, unlike their middle class peers, were engaged in a wide range of occupations. The factors which account for their support were probably less to do with their experience as working class women at work, and more to do with that experience which they shared with many middle class women. This was the experience of being the head of a household, which is dealt with later. The women at the working class end of the spectrum in class II include two farmers and one dairy keeper, two grocers and two provision dealers, three stationers, four milliners, three baby linen and fancy goods dealers and seven other shopkeepers. They were among those women with whom the Kensington Society members might have done business. In class III, again the requirements of the canvassers might have introduced them to the women in the course of their daily life. Three dressmakers, a woman who worked for Jacob Holyoake, a saddler and a tailor were in this occupational group. The three charwomen or domestic workers, a cotton baller and a pattern setter and a laundress appear to have been canvassed by door-to door method, in streets where most women have not been traced. The four housekeepers who signed were not, apparently, employed by any canvasser. No servant working in the home of a woman who canvassed has been found to have signed.

⁴⁵Katherine Gleadle. The Early Feminists, Radical Unitarians and the emergence of the Women's Rights Movement, 1831-1851. London, Macmillan, 1995, p. 113.

Chart 4I Family background of forty-three Kensington Society members and 265 Suffrage Petition women.



In conclusion it appears that the Kensington Society members were mainly from the professional and substantial middle classes, but that they called on the support of a different range of women according to whether those women were living in the household of a man, or were self supporting. Among those with men in the home, support was spread evenly across the professional and business sections of the middle class and those of the lower-middle-class/upper-working-class. A substantial number of working class women also signed. However, where the woman who signed also worked, the vast majority were from the middle class, and the majority of those were in the business of managing or teaching in schools. The working women in class II, III, IV and V appear to be those whom the canvassers would have met in the course of their daily commercial and social transactions. The differences between the range of men's and women's occupations was also particularly marked in the teaching profession. Comparatively few male educators' wives signed, (Josephine Butler, and Emma Fitch, a Kensington Society member being among the few exceptions), whereas many female educators did. A number of men signed the University Local Examinations Memorial in 1864, but support for suffrage in 1866 did not come from their families. It could be that the pressure for separation of the education and suffrage campaigns did not come from Emily Davies alone, but might have been forced by the reaction of male teachers to the idea of women's suffrage.

Chart 4m shows the family background of people who supported the first suffrage committee the year after the 1866 petition. Here there is not a single person below the middle class, and apart from a few working women, for example Elizabeth Wolstenholme and Charlotte Cushman the actress, they are almost without exception very well-to-do.

Chart 4m Occupational class of Subscribers to the Enfranchisement of Women Committee October 1866-July 1867⁴⁶



The contrast with both the Kensington Society and the suffrage petition is noticeable. In this group there are only four teachers; Miss Bostock and Miss Sturch, administrators of Bedford College, Miss Wolstenholme, and possibly Miss Holland. The necessity to have spare income was essential for becoming a subscriber, but this cannot be the only reason why single women and working class women and teachers did not subscribe. Miss Wolstenholme was not well off, yet she was prepared to subscribe a guinea. The reasons for apparent dramatic change in the type of person who gave support, from mainly single, to mainly married, and from borderline middle class and working class to solidly middle class will be speculated on in Chapter Seven.

⁴⁶The Clark Archive, Street Somerset. Priestman Papers. Misc. Pol. Enfranchisement of Women Committee. Balance Sheet of receipts and expenditure. October 1866-July 1867. [see page 109].

4. Geography

Sorting signatures to the suffrage petition by address produced one of the most fruitful lines of enquiry in this research. Although some women only gave sketchy addresses, only thirty-nine women gave no information at all about where they lived. So, for the vast majority, town, street, and even house number was available. The crude geography of the petition, a simple mapping country-wide, demonstrated that support spread, quite unevenly, across the whole of the British Isles. Particular towns, cities and other smaller localities provided from one to over four hundred signatures each. But by looking more closely at each locality, it was sometimes possible to analyse the distribution of support street by street. More helpfully, in terms of the aims of this research, clusters of signatures could then be investigated to discover the role played in collection by key individuals. In very many localities it emerged that there was at least one woman who had either a connection or shared experience, with members of the Kensington Society. Such a woman, it could be deduced, was the key figure in the canvassing process. The range of such connections or shared experiences (for example an earlier campaign) was surprisingly narrow. Thus the geographical analysis was given an added dimension by a shift from physical mapping towards a form of social mapping. The 'key canvassers' could be mapped in terms of the place where they physically collected signatures, but also in terms of the ways in which they related to each other and the petition committee. It was also possible to consider not only such connections, but how they were used practically in the service of a particular campaign. However, other evidence, notably the correspondence of one of the committee members, Helen Taylor, illuminates how such a crude analysis of connections can over-simplify the process. Her correspondence suggested the actual complexity and range of the connections upon which women could draw.

Women signed the petition from Shetland in the North to Falmouth in the South, from Galway on the West coast of Ireland to Aldeburgh in Suffolk. However the bulk of the signatures came from London (414) Manchester (173) and Leeds (106). Over fifty women signed in Edinburgh, Salford and Nottingham respectively. Thirty-seven signatures were collected in Stroud. Tenterden, Kent, Rochdale, Aldeburgh and Brighton provided more than twenty signatures each. Ten locations (Bristol and Clifton, Birkenhead, Southport, Liverpool, Middlesex, Newcastle, Ipswich, Battle, Cuckfield, and Haywards Heath) provided between ten and twenty names. In each of a further sixty locations between two and ten women signed, and in thirty-seven places only one individual signed.

This crude mapping suggested that, apart from London and the area which is now Greater Manchester, there was no particular geographical pattern over the British Isles. Large areas did not send any signatures, but in general, most areas of the country are represented. When assessing the impact of the petition after its presentation, but before its reception by the weekly papers, Emily Davies commented to Helen Taylor :

I suppose the great thing now however will be to get up petitions...It seems to me that petitions either from a place or from some definite body, are likely to be more effective than those which come vaguely from the whole country.⁴⁷

To the historian today, the geographical distribution of signatures is mainly significant in that it shows that the interest in the question of women's access to the vote was not confined to the large conurbations of London and Manchester.

Particular localities were examined, using street maps. It was possible to map support where contemporary local maps were available, as they were for London. It was difficult to assess the role of propinquity in London accurately. Public transport allowed John Stuart Mill to commute to the City from Blackheath. Letters and journals, for example those of Annette Akroyd and Emily Davies indicate that middle-class women moved around London quite freely to visit friends.⁴⁸ The social centre at Langham Place, home of the English Woman's Journal drew women from different parts of London who probably continued to keep in touch with each other. As will be seen when the postal canvassing by Helen Taylor is discussed, a person living in a suburban location could access women throughout the country, but might not be able to collect many signatures within their own street. When the three major centres for support, London, Manchester and Leeds are set aside, the actual number of people signing in different locations shows that more women (194) signed within groups of 2-10 neighbours. Only 37 women signed 'on their own' Ten of these were in the category of key individuals, for example, either celebrities like Harriet Martineau, teachers who had recently signed the University Local Examinations Memorial, or Kensington Society members and their friends.

After examining the physical geography of locations where women signed the petition, it was impossible to avoid the conclusion that there was another 'geography' at

⁴⁷London School of Economics. Mill Taylor Papers. Vol. XIII, No. 181, Emily Davies to Helen Taylor, July 18th, 1866.

⁴⁸For an analysis of women's place in the West End of London see Lynn Walker. 'Vistas of pleasure: women consumers of urban space in the West End of London 1850-1900. in Clarissa Campbell Orr, ed. *Women in the Victorian Art World*. Manchester, Manchester University Press, 1995.

work, which was considerably more powerful than mere bricks and mortar, and for which the term 'social geography' is used. Only thirty-seven women signed the petition in isolation. Therefore for most women it was a social act. Examination of clusters of signatures in locations produced evidence that in virtually all locations it was possible to identify one or more key individuals who were connected through shared campaigning, relationship, or friendship to a member of the Kensington Society. This was naturally to be expected. However the methods of these key individuals as they canvassed in their own localities can be examined by looking at some contrasting localities. There is evidence of a range of strategies which make use of the social networks available to these women. There is also evidence of what those networks were. One of the problems of investigating this petition for evidence of these social networks is the lack of a 'pasted' version, as originally collected. This version was designed for an audience (Members of Parliament and the press) whose first interest would be in looking for 'names' of women seen to be of importance. In addition to this, addresses gave a clear indication of the geographical spread of support. Subsequent petitions where many more signatures were collected, were usually listed in the suffrage journals by place and number of signatures, again emphasising that support was not merely a minority, or metropolitan phenomenon. Where a petition survives in its pasted format, the social geography of its collection can be directly studied, since each pasted sheet consists of the names of people who signed together. An example of such a petition is the South Australian women's suffrage petition of 1894, which has recently been published in its pasted as well as alphabetical order.⁴⁹ An education petition of 1867 survives at Girton College in its pasted form.⁵⁰ It shows some women collecting signatures away from home.

Clusters of women, either within larger localities such as London, or in more isolated settings, ranged from two to more than one hundred. In all, around 132 cities, towns, villages and hamlets are named in the petition. When those settlements outside London, Edinburgh, and Manchester were examined, it was found that in forty-five localities there was at least one woman who was in one of the following categories.

- 1 A member of the Kensington Society.
2. Signed the 1864 University Local Examinations Memorial.
- 3 Connected with the English Woman's Journal or the NAPSS
- 4 A member of a well known Radical family, for example a Bright, Priestman, Martineau, etc.

⁴⁹Information from Dr Margaret Allen, Department of Women's Studies, The University of Adelaide, GPO Box 498, Adelaide, South Australia 5001.

⁵⁰Girton College, Cambridge Emily Davies Papers, 1867 Memorial.

If these women were assumed to be the local canvassers for the petition, it was possible to assess what contribution each might have made. Two NAPSS members potentially collected eight other signatures, an average of four each. Seventeen members of Radical families who were not members of the Kensington Society collected an average of six signatures each. Twenty two women who signed the University Local Examinations Memorial collected an average of seven signatures each. Eight Kensington Society members between them potentially collected 258 other signatures, an average of thirty-two signatures each

The next part of this chapter will examine in detail these connections which were drawn on to collect the petition. What was remarkable about the average numbers of signatures was not the enthusiasm of the Kensington Society canvassers, or how few of them achieved so much. Such commitment was to be expected from the organisation which initiated the petition. The success of those teachers who had previously supported the University Local Examinations Memorial is more striking, in that for most of them this was their only other public action in support of suffrage, since none, apart from the ubiquitous Elizabeth Wolstenhome, appear to have become subscribers to the early suffrage societies

Geographically the most successful Kensington Society canvassers appear to have been Barbara Bodichon who probably canvassed 53 women in Sussex and Mrs and Miss Heaton⁵¹ in Leeds who were twice as successful. There is quite a contrast between these rural and urban canvasses. Of the 106 women who signed in Leeds, eighty-seven did not appear in either the 1861 or 1871 census or street directories. Of those who did, only two could be classified as 'gentry', though a further five women were traced through the Leeds Ladies' Education Association, whose membership was drawn from the circle of well to do friends of the Heaton women. Added to this were three more women from the families of professional men, and two women running a school. Thirteen women were from working class or lower middle class families including a widowed laundress, the wife of a farrier, a dressmaker married to a brush maker and a glover's wife with sons who were a mill hand and a cloth dresser. (These particular women all lived in Raglan Road or Raglan Place). One road, Woodhouse Street, was the source of twenty seven signatures. Only two of these surnames appear in street directories, those of a shopkeeper and a cooper, and one in the 1871 census. However the pattern for the street appears to have been that its residents were overwhelmingly living in small shops or craft workshops. The one woman

⁵¹ Miss Ellen Heaton, b 1816 and her sister in law Mrs Heaton. Mrs Heaton did not sign the petition herself, but her contribution to campaigns was recognised by Emily Davies. "One of my most faithful and valued allies." Girton College, Emily Davies Papers, ED .42.

from this street who appears in the 1871 census, Mrs Emma Tingle, had moved from number 159 to number 141, Woodhouse Street since 1866. In 1871 she was aged thirty-nine, and was employed as a charwomen. She was head of a household which consisted of a seventeen year old daughter who also worked as a charwoman, a son who was a leather dresser and two younger daughters. Incidentally, two of the three women who were members of the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage in Leeds in 1868 lived in Woodhouse Street, and one of those, H.M.Pennington, lived in the same house as Emma Tingle in 1866, which suggests that this particular early suffrage society may not have been overwhelmingly middle class. The canvassing in Leeds appears to have been conducted on a house by house basis, following the tradition of the mass petitions of the women's Anti-Slavery societies. Many streets canvassed were close to the homes of Mrs Heaton and Miss Heaton. Two points arise from the evidence in Leeds. One is that nearly three-quarters of women who signed had moved house at least twice between 1861 and 1871. Bearing in mind the fact that most of the streets where they lived were occupied by working class people, the implication might be that shifts in fortune, leading to changes of lodging might be a characteristic of the vulnerability of women, which improved legal status might alleviate. The second point is that of the eighteen women for whom some information was available through the census, nine were heads of household, with one more living in such a household. (The experience of female heads of households is discussed in the next chapter)

Barbara Bodichon appears to have been the canvasser in the area of Sussex and Kent which was within reach of her country home of Scalands, near Robertsbridge. Within five miles of her house, sixteen women signed in Battle. It appears that eight of them were from the families of shopkeepers; printers and stationers, watchmakers, etc. One, Mrs Mary Ann Blackman, by 1878 was herself running a stationery business. Within ten miles, in Hastings, a relative of a surgeon dentist signed, with one other woman. In St Leonard's, Bathsheba Pilbeam, who seven years earlier had run a grocery business in Mount Street, Battle, was the only woman to sign. Within a fifteen mile radius of Robertsbridge, a further 34 women, living in Tunbridge Wells, Collier Street and Tenterden signed. In Tunbridge Wells, the Ashurst Biggs family, mother Matilda and daughters Caroline and Elizabeth, (who were later very active supporters of the campaign) were joined by two other women, one of whom was a householder living in the substantial sounding Ashford Lodge. In Tonbridge, three unidentified women, one of whom was a householder signed, together with Mrs Catherine Masters, a wine and spirit merchant in the High Street. In Collier Street, Staplehurst, there is again one female head of household, the apparently prosperous Mrs Eleanor French. In 1866 she was a thirty-eight

year-old widow, who in the 1861 census was shown to be farming 142 acres, and employing 8 men and 4 boys . Her four children, aged between four and sixteen and an unmarried sister shared her home, where she kept one manservant. Miss Elizabeth French⁵² and a grocer and wheelwright's wife also signed in this isolated hamlet. Twenty two women signed in Tenterden. Of fourteen women tentatively identified, five were related to 'private residents', landowners, or to men who already had the vote in 1866. Nine were shopkeepers or crafts people, including a cabinet maker, a tallow chandler, a plumber and a glazier.

The contrast between the two areas of canvass, Leeds and Kent/Sussex borders, is between a geographically compact urban area, canvassed by the local doctor's wife and his eccentric sister, and a much larger rural area, canvassed by a temporary resident and 'second home' owner. In Leeds, a comparatively large number of lower middle class and working class women, who moved house frequently perhaps responded with support because of the Heaton women's very local reputation. In the borders of Kent and Sussex where Barbara Bodichon sought support it appeared that a mixture of a few middle class acquaintances, crafts people and shopkeepers signed. Barbara Bodichon may easily have come into contact with the latter two groups in the process of building her idiosyncratic 'mediaeval' cottage, 'Scalands'.

Nottingham and Stroud are two of the towns where teachers involved in the education campaigns appear to have been the canvassers. In both places, the teachers appear to have looked for support from women who shared their experience of running a small business, or who were living on a small private income. In Nottingham, where two school proprietors seem to be the link, they called on two other teachers, one living with her elderly father and one servant (in 1861) and the other retired, with two servants. Another woman who signed from a similar background was the daughter-in-law of an independent minister, whose husband was a schoolmaster, and who kept one servant. Three of the four Ward sisters, who ran their own millinery and lace business, which employed ten young women, and a single woman with income from houses, lands and dividends also signed. Anne W. Shaw, who acted as housekeeper to her widowed father, a printer and stationer employing three assistants, five apprentices and three boys was another woman whose own life was closely linked to the work of her family and who might therefore appreciate the value of the vote, should her circumstances change. Two women who took in lodgers, one an unmarried pattern setter, the other a tailor whose

⁵² Miss Elizabeth French. She corresponded with Helen Taylor in 1868. She wore trousers, and advocated population control. Mill Taylor Papers vol. XIII 198 and 199.

husband and lodger shared her trade were from a slightly different level of society. Again there are another forty women who have not been identified. However, of the identified women, nearly half are female heads of household. This group of women is reminiscent of the social circle described in Mrs Gaskell's novel *Cranford*.⁵³ (Mrs Gaskell's daughter, Mary Ann Gaskell, signed the suffrage petition.) Two women who had signed the University Local Examinations Memorial lived in Stroud, Gloucs.. The nineteen women who signed there are a mixture of almost equal numbers of clergy and gentry, trades people and teachers. Again just over half those traced (7 householders and three dependants) are living in households headed by a woman. No fewer than five women are teachers, proprietors of three different schools. Another, Miss Rosa Humphreys, with another female relative, ran a Berlin wool repository.

Significantly those women living closest to the canvassers, in their own homes in fact, were not called on for support. In no case did any domestic servant in the household of an identified supporter sign the petition. This even applies to the household of Barbara Bodichon, who, when in America, gloried in the opportunity to talk to people of the lower classes. Where households appeared in both the 1861 and 1871 census, and were clearly settled, in no case did the same servant appear in both census returns. The servants were most usually in their teens, from a distant rural area.

Thus the crude social geography appeared to suggest that a few Kensington Society members called on their own friends and relatives, and on a few women whom they had met at the Social Science annual meetings. The friends included women with whom they had shared experiences which included Anti-Slavery and Radical politics, and involvement with Queen's College, London, Bedford College and the offices at Langham Place. In addition, the women who had signed the University Local Examinations Memorial were approached. The idea of women's suffrage was introduced to a group of school proprietors already committed to improving the education of girls. These women seem to have collected signatures with some energy. Within each locality, where these individuals went from door to door canvassing support, they did not confine themselves to collecting signatures from teachers like themselves. They seem to have focused on, or at least been more likely to get support from, women who were heads of their household, or women who lived in such households. In locality after locality, between one third and one half of the women who could be traced lived in a household headed by a woman.

⁵³ Elizabeth Cleghorn Gaskell. *Cranford* London, 1853. [Mrs Gaskell's daughter signed the suffrage petition]

It could be argued that these women, who had no further recorded commitment to suffrage, are of little importance, and that the fifty or so women involved in more than three campaigns, or the several hundred who at least had some other commitment are the only true feminists. But the physical geography and the crude social geography reveal that there were, country-wide, women from a wide social spectrum interested in the issue. They also suggest that country-wide and within localities, there were social networks which were available to nurture and support women who were in the particularly difficult circumstances. These networks of acquaintance, if not friendship, straddled class of origin, and emphasised present, shared situation, (though perhaps the refinements of social status satirised by Elizabeth Gaskell pervaded the actual social intercourse between them.) The widowed charwoman, the sisters running a lace manufacturing business, the hop farmer, the Principal of a small school, the single woman with a small private income, taking in a lodger to make ends meet, in spite of the differences in their class origin, and their present prosperity, had a point of contact. Whether this point of contact was only the brief moment of canvassing, or whether it was sustained in everyday life, it is impossible to discover now. However, as will be shown later, all-women households without private income tended to be larger, implying the sharing of resources, and co-operation.

It would seem likely that this mutual support would also extend to other households within an area. At least women would be aware of similarities and shared problems. This might be a relationship of patronage, of middle class women choosing to use the services of women whose circumstances were similar in some ways to their own. Or it might have led to some mutual self help. (In Cranford the women club together to pay the rent for their friend whose investments are in a failed bank). The signatures of these women on this particular, very relevant petition, could be considered the shadow, or the trace of a shadow, of evidence for mutual support among a deeply disadvantaged group in mid-Victorian Britain, a social geography of the 'redundant woman'. Many of the women who have not been traced must fall into this category, their very presence on the petition the only evidence remaining of their existence within the social networks of disenfranchised women.

5. Connections.

The fifth part of this chapter examines the connections which were drawn on to collect the 1866 suffrage petition. It begins with a case study, considering how Helen Taylor collected signatures for the suffrage petition. After looking at the connections which Helen Taylor used, an analysis will be made of connections based on family, friendship and shared life experiences. (The next chapter explores in detail the nature of such shared 'experience')

Helen Taylor was born in 1831, the youngest of three children, and only daughter, of Harriet Taylor's first marriage. After Harriet's death in 1858, Helen gave up her ambitions to become a professional actress, and devoted herself to the care of her stepfather, John Stuart Mill. She acted as his secretary, taking responsibility for much of his minor correspondence. After his death, she was elected to the London School Board, and stood unsuccessfully for selection as a Parliamentary candidate.⁵⁴ Because of the unconventional relationship between her mother and stepfather, (a long, platonic friendship during her father's lifetime), the family seemed to have been socially isolated, even after John and Harriet's marriage.

As a child, Helen had led a very quiet life, and she occupied much of her time with reading and acting plays in her toy theatre. Her mother and stepfather worked closely together, and seem to have been self sufficient socially. It appeared that Helen organised the household. In her mid-twenties, Helen had acting lessons from a professional actress, Fanny Stirling, in whom she confided, and with whom she kept in contact over the next decade. Helen lived with Harriet and John Stuart Mill in Blackheath after their marriage, and continued to live there with her stepfather after her mother's death. Part of each year was spent in Avignon, close to her mother's tomb. After her mother's death, one of her closest friends was Miss Caroline Lindley, forty-five years her senior, who lived with her brothers and cared for her young nieces and nephews in Blackheath. Through Mill's long association with the group of Philosophic Radicals, Helen knew members of the group, who were of her step-father's generation. Her step-father was also involved in NAPSS, as was his friend Thomas Hare. She knew Hare's three daughters including Alice Westlake, and Katharine Hare, both of whom were a few years younger than her. The surviving correspondence of Helen Taylor,⁵⁵ and her adolescent diaries, show a woman with a few close friends, and those mainly of her mother's generation. Among her letters

⁵⁴ Penny Newell, Dave Russell etc., 'Helen Taylor and the 1885 General Election.', South London Record Southwark and Lambeth History Workshop. No 1, 1985. pp. 33-40.

⁵⁵London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers. Especially Vols. VII, IX, XIII-XVI, XIX-XXVI, Boxes II and IV.

are some replies to requests for signatures to the suffrage petition of 1866. In contrast with the popular and affectionate Barbara Bodichon, who maintained supportive ties with close friends in spite of frequent absences in Algeria and rural Sussex, Helen Taylor appears to have been very cautious, and aware that her views on the rights of women set her apart from people. Barbara Bodichon's illegitimacy did not appear to have impeded the collection of a wide range of friends, whereas Helen Taylor clearly felt that friendship was a rare luxury. So the way in which Helen Taylor used her connections may not be typical of other members of the Kensington Society.

When canvassing for the suffrage petition, with which she was so closely involved, Helen Taylor seems to have worked through local social networks, and through relatives, rather than by indiscriminate house to house canvas. In the area where she lived those women who signed were scattered, and none were immediate neighbours either of Helen Taylor, or of each other. Another Kensington Society member, Lady Nichols, also lived in Blackheath, but as she herself did not sign the petition, her contribution to the collection is more doubtful. There are some connections between women who signed which indicated a similarity of social class. For example, one had taken over the ownership or tenancy of the same house. Of those women traced in the area around Helen Taylor's home, most were very well-to-do. Where their occupation, (for example property developer, architect, steamship company proprietor) does not support this assertion, the size and style of the houses which they occupied confirms this. There were also two women who had close connections with the 'Langham Place set'. Jane Lewin, niece of Harriet Grote, had worked in the offices of the English Woman's Journal, and Elspet Strahan's brother Alexander was the publisher of Bessie Parkes' most recent work in 1866.⁵⁶ Helen Taylor's friend Caroline Lindley entered into the project with enthusiasm. In a postscript to a letter regarding the petition she remarks.

In case I might be able to aid our cause I have copied the enclosed papers. You know my full occupation and quiet life much negatives my ability- but all I can do is yours⁵⁷

In the same letter there is some insight into the responses of rank and file supporters and their families. Neither Caroline Lindley nor Mrs Hickson appear to have any further public commitment to feminist causes, but nevertheless the strength of their support shows clearly:

⁵⁶ Bessie Rayner Parkes Essays on women's work London, Alexander Strahan, 1866.

⁵⁷ London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers, vol. XXII, 429. Caroline Lindley to Helen Taylor. n.d.

With great surprise and pleasure I see our loved friend Mrs Hickson [of Fairseat, Wrotham, Kent] not only able to write her name but after so long an indisposition we must rejoice together in the energy and spirits with which she rouses to aid the good cause which we have in hand. Mr Hickson asks me "to give the compts. of himself and Mrs Hickson to you and Mr Mill and say we both wish success to Miss Taylor's efforts congratulating her at the same time upon her ability to be useful- a great privilege" ⁵⁸

It is possible that Mr and Mrs Hickson also engaged the support of Caroline Drayson of Northfleet, who lived in Huggens College, described in a contemporary guide book as a handsome college consisting of forty residences and a chapel. Twenty-eight of these residences were occupied by ladies and gentlemen of reduced circumstances who had a weekly allowance of 20 shillings each. Caroline Lindley was still collecting signatures after the petition had been delivered to the Houses of Parliament, or rather replies were still coming in response to her letters. On 11th June she gave the names of two women in Croydon who wished to sign:

In order to get these signatures shall I trouble you to let me have another petition or can I have them placed on the last which I had the pleasure to send you?⁵⁹

However the actual labour to obtain just a few signatures was indicated in a letter written only three days earlier. With this letter a sheet of the petition was enclosed:

I kept the petition which you left in my care because only one dear friend had signed it I have still two unanswered letters but my experience where I hoped the most and failed leads me to forward the one name as it may be of some use, though I fear for the present use it will be too late. It is well for us that dear Mr Mill will present the petition.⁶⁰

As well as local canvassing among her well-to-do neighbours, Helen Taylor used the post. A draft letter gives some indication of the delicacy with which the subject had to be approached. The revision are revealing. [Where she crossed out a word it has here been indicated thus (word x)]:

⁵⁸ibid.

⁵⁹ ibid . 431. 11th June 1866 Caroline Lindley to Helen Taylor.

⁶⁰ ibid. 430. 8th June 1866 Caroline Lindley to Helen Taylor.

Dear Miss Chadwick,

I do not know whether you (will x) have heard of the enclosed petition and I therefore venture to send it to you believing that you will (probably x) certainly be interested in it and hoping that you will (be willing x) like to add your signature. May I at the same time ask you to request that of your Mother and if among your friends there are any whom you think likely to (agree x sympathise x) agree with the object we should be glad to have their signatures also and with as little delay as possible. Apologising for (troubling x) addressing you on the subject but hoping that a common sympathy will be a sufficient excuse I am, dear Miss Chadwick yours very truly ⁶¹

The tone of the draft moves from hesitant to quietly assertive, though it is meticulously polite and detached. The recipient is allowed space to disagree. Refusals were as likely as signatures, even when consent might have been anticipated. On 29th May Helen Taylor had received the following rather curt note from a Mary Ellis:

Beg to return the petition unsigned well knowing that my daughters' views on the subject of it agree with my own. I had already rec'd from Mrs P.A. Taylor the petition, and to her I more fully stated my reasons for declining to enter into the movement ⁶²

In the event, Marion Chadwick agreed to sign with enthusiasm. However on 5th June a letter arrived from her mother, Rachel, who had been persuaded to sign by her daughter

I have this moment discovered that my daughter cannot legally express an opinion on the subject of the petition you forwarded as she is not yet of age. Would you therefore erase her name from the list of signatures. I do not think she will have shifted from her opinion when she is of age- should the question at that time still need to be urged by a petition.⁶³

The characteristic optimism and enthusiasm of those who were sympathetic was matched by apologies for their inadequacies as canvassers. Mary Ann Plummer of Hackney Wick collected nine signatures in her locality, but nevertheless commented:

It is a matter of regret to me that I have not been able to obtain more, but Mr Plummer has been lately so much taken up with the business of Victoria Park that I have been unable to get out so much as usual. It will always afford me much

⁶¹ *ibid* vol XII 144 May 29th [1866] Draft letter Helen Taylor to Marion Chadwick.

⁶² *ibid* vol XIII 197 May 29th 1866 Mary Ellis to Helen Taylor.

⁶³ *ibid*. vol. XX 169 June 5th 1866 Rachel Chadwick to Helen Taylor.

pleasure to help you, in my own humble way, in any such matters and I am sure that the same may be said of my husband. ⁶⁴

Neither Mary Ann Plummer, Caroline Lindley nor Rachel Chadwick appear in the lists of subscribers to the suffrage societies after 1866, in spite of their apparent enthusiasm. In contrast, Kate, Lady Amberley, whose father-in-law was Lord Russell, later became both a subscriber and lecturer in the cause. Helen Taylor asked her to sign two petitions at once, and she replied:

I am delighted to give my name to both petitions. The one for women being doctors I particularly care for and should be happy to give a subscription also, if it is wanted and you tell me what sort of sum... As regards the right of voting, I am in favour of women with property doing so, but only in that case. ⁶⁵

As well as calling on local and London friends, Helen Taylor also asked her step father's sister and niece to sign, which they both did. Through John Stuart Mill, she also approached one woman whom she did not know, Rose Ann Hall, who lived in Edgware, and had written to Mill on the subject of suffrage. She wrote to Helen Taylor:

I have this morning rec'd a letter from Mr Mill, with a copy of petition etc., etc. and rejoice to hear of a movement of which I was previously quite unaware. I shall most willingly sign the Petition and also endeavour to obtain other signatures.

I must beg you to thank Mr Mill in my name for his extremely kind and courteous reply- Although I sh'd have been pleased if he had considered the occasion opportune, when the Reform Bill goes into Committee to submit to the house the question of the enfranchisement of women; still I acquiesce respectfully in his view. Meanwhile it w'd be well to awaken the minds of women themselves to the importance of the privilege for there seems, unfortunately among many of them but little appreciation of its value.⁶⁶

Although previously unknown to Helen Taylor, Miss Hall's work as a canvasser was quickly appreciated, and she continued to contribute ideas towards the collection on later petitions ⁶⁷ Helen Taylor drew on her friends, her social circle in her neighbourhood, and

⁶⁴ *ibid* vol XIII 242. June 5th 1866 Mary Ann Plummer to Helen Taylor.

⁶⁵ *ibid* vol XIX 13. 29th May 1866 Kate Amberley to Helen Taylor.

⁶⁶ *ibid* vol. XIII 204 Rose Ann Hall to Helen Taylor

⁶⁷ Rose Ann Hall She later became, (with Charlotte Babb, an artist, who also signed this petition) one of the first advocates of 'No taxation without representation' and from 1870 regularly refused to pay taxes, having various items of cutlery distrained by bailiffs each year. She recorded her experiences each year until her marriage put a stop to the protest, but the two women protested in isolation, though the idea was taken up again by an organisation founded by the Priestman sisters in the 1880's.

her step-family, as well as acquaintances London-wide who she hoped would be sympathetic. Several of these were in their turn able to collect more signatures in the same way.

For most of the women who signed, these connections are no longer obvious, but clearly they must have existed, criss-crossing the country in an invisible web. One of the most striking aspects of this study, was the success with which teachers appeared to have canvassed. This was all the more remarkable in the light of their apparent disappearance for organised suffrage campaigning in the next decade. One reason may be that they saw the education and suffrage issues as complementary in 1866. Another reason might be that, as professional women, whose work involved successful interaction with the general public, they had local knowledge, interpersonal skills, and an existing clientele whom they could canvass. This called the perception of the downtrodden schoolmistress into question. Fifty-two women had already been among those mobilised by Emily Davies and Elizabeth Wolstenholme to appeal for University Local Examinations. Some of them had also entered their pupils for these examinations. They were again called on, this time to canvas, and their contribution was effective.

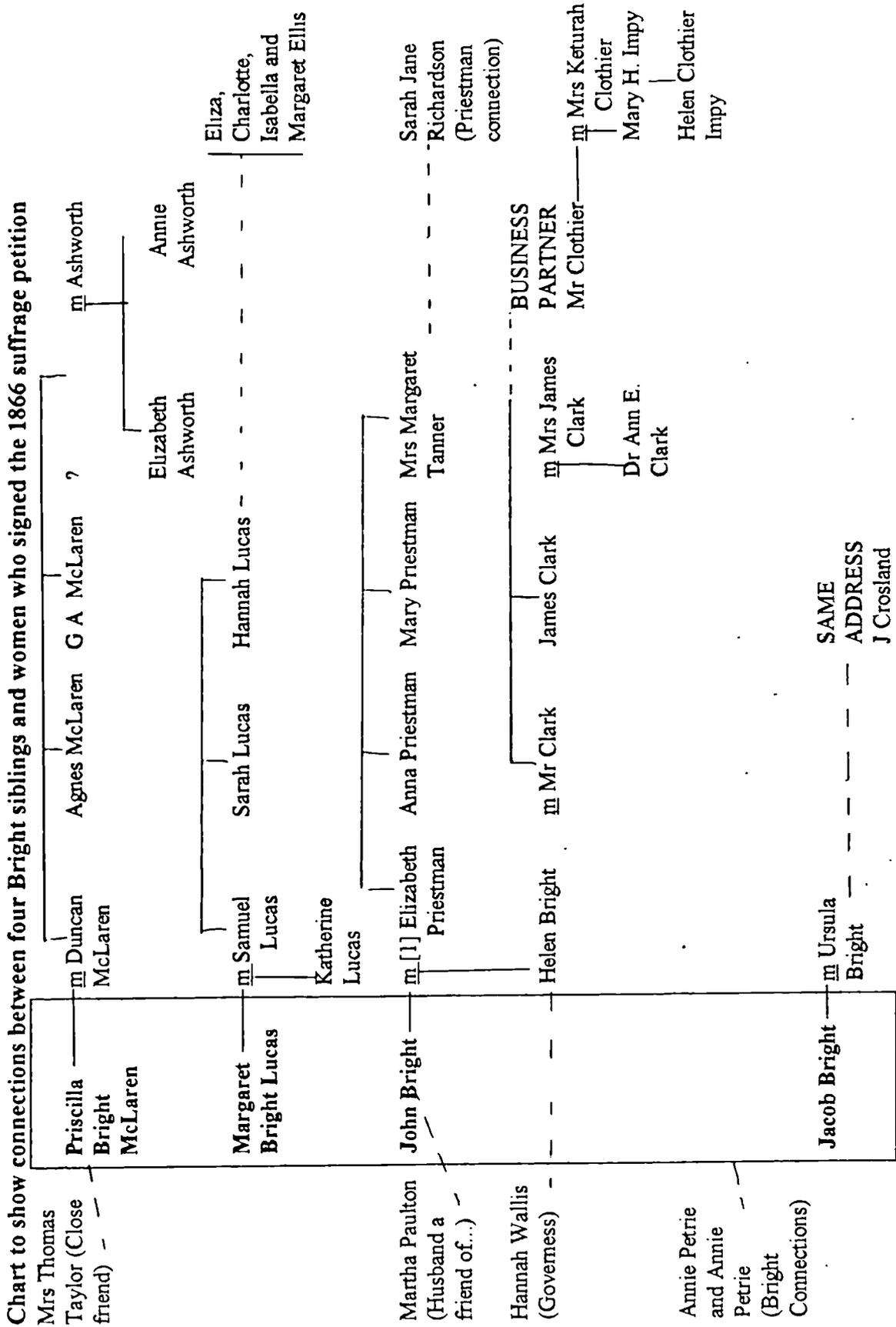
Three overlapping groups of women who had longer term connections with the Kensington Society membership itself, appear to have been responsible for the rest of the canvassing. The group (in the loosest sense of the word) which had been in existence the longest, was that around the Anti-Slavery feminists (who were discussed in Chapter Three). With them were included those women connected with Bedford and Queen's College, London, as administrators or students. This group overlapped to a certain extent with those women involved with Langham Place. There was less overlap with the Radical/ political group, which tended to be linked through male family members, P.A. Taylor, J.S. Mill, Thomas Hare, and various Radical MPs, for example John Bright and Edward Stansfield. This is not to say that the women were dependent upon the men for their communication. The work of Clare Midgley⁶⁸ makes clear the independence with which these women worked.

The interest which the Society of Friends took in genealogy meant that rank and file Quakers are recorded in more detail than many other women at this period. Through the Quaker Dictionary of Biography⁶⁹ family links could be traced between more than twenty women who signed the petition, and in addition, in many cases their friendships were also on record. Chart 4n shows this web of connections in schematic form. John

⁶⁸Clare Midgley. Women against slavery: the British campaigns, 1780-1870. London, Routledge, 1992.

⁶⁹Friends House Library, Euston, London. Quaker Dictionary of Biography, Mss.

Chart 4n The Bright Connection.



Bright himself did not support women's suffrage, but his sisters Priscilla and Margaret and his sister-in-law, Ursula were very active in a range of causes after 1866.

None of the women on this chart were members of the Kensington Society, and it is not clear where this web of connections was activated, though Ursula Bright was on the executive of the National Society for Women's Suffrage in 1868. The balance sheet of the Enfranchisement of Women Committee for October 1866-July 1867 includes receipts from Liliash Ashworth, Mrs Jacob Bright, Mrs B Clark, Mrs Lucas, Mrs Paulton, Miss Priestman, Mrs Tanner, and Mrs Taylor (Oxon.) [Mrs Thomas Taylor], any of whom might have initiated the canvass among the relatives and friends. Hannah Lucas, as has been mentioned, told Eliza Ellis about the English Woman's Journal, and may have been in contact with Langham Place. Geographically the thirty women in this connected group were living in locations spread across England and Scotland. They lived in Oxfordshire, Alderley Edge, Edinburgh, Newcastle, Leicester, London, Brighton, Clevedon, Street (Somerset) among other places. As Quakers, regular Meetings would keep the families in touch, but families connected with John Bright and to a lesser extent his brother Jacob, could not avoid being politically aware. Within the group of relatives are included three of the youngest women known to have signed the petition; Ann E. Clark (who was one of the group of doctors who trained with Sophia Jex Blake), her cousin Helen Bright, and Helen Clothier Impey. Helen Impey's grandmother, Keturah Clothier, was one of the oldest women to sign. Sisters-in-law, who are normally difficult to detect because of name changes, feature predominantly in this group.⁷⁰

Another network, this time radiating from Elizabeth Garrett and Louisa [Garrett] Smith's home town, Aldeburgh, displays a range of connections being used. In Aldeburgh itself twenty women signed, including Elizabeth and Louisa's mother. Three of these women are mentioned in Millicent Garrett Fawcett's memoirs as family friends.⁷¹ Mrs Garrett's sister in Snape Bridge also signed. The family connection radiated around the world to India, where the Garrett sisters' sister-in-law, Mrs N.D. Garrett signed. Millicent Garrett's future mother-in-law, Mrs Fawcett gave her support from Salisbury. Her son, Henry Fawcett was a colleague of John Stuart Mill, [and had also proposed marriage to Elizabeth Garrett and Bessie Parkes.]

⁷⁰Writing about a later period, Sandra Stanley Holton discusses this network in 'To educate women into rebellion, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the creation of a transatlantic network of radical suffragists.' in American Historical Review vol. 99, no. 4, October 1994

⁷¹Millicent Garrett Fawcett. *What I Remember*. New York, G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1884.

Another notable supporter in Aldeburgh was Mrs William Garrard, 'The Ipswich Chartist', who by 1866 was a neighbour of Mrs Garrett. Mrs Garrard was also founder of the Ipswich Working Men's Association.⁷² Matilda Betham Edwards, the farmer who had given information to Barbara Bodichon on the problems of farmers' widows lived near Ipswich too. In all sixteen women signed in Ipswich. Those few who have been traced are older women with servants. This network of Garrett connections includes at least twenty-nine women. (Three younger members of this extended family became suffrage campaign leaders later. Elizabeth's younger sisters Millicent Garrett (Fawcett), and Agnes Garrett, and their cousin Rhoda Garrett. All were under twenty-one in 1866)

It was not possible to discover whether these patterns of 'networking' were unique, or whether they were replicated in all the families of the other women who canvassed for the petition. However there were enough fragmentary examples of similar networking to back up the thesis that the Quaker model could be applied to the whole petition. It emerged that the social geography of the petition consisted of three elements. Central was the Kensington Society, with its links with supporters of the recent Education campaigns, the older feminists involved with Anti-slavery, Bedford College and Queen's College, London, and the families of Radical politicians. Fanning out from this core two elements emerge, a geography of family and friendship, and a more localised geography of class solidarity and cross-class interaction. Both the core group and the rank and file supporters appear to have called upon women from both elements to varying degrees.

⁷² Jutta Schwarzkopf *Women in the Chartist movement* London, Macmillan, 1991. Three other women whom she mentions who also signed the Suffrage petition are Mary Lovett (wife of Chartist leader William Lovett) Mary Ann Walker of Birmingham and Elizabeth Richardson. Elizabeth Richardson lived in Salford where sixty-three signatures were collected. In addition to one clergy relative and one Chief Constable's wife, thirteen women who signed here were working class, and the rest were from the lost, mobile group, in this case from what appear to be working class streets.

Chapter Five. Shared experience.

Having placed the women in this study in time, and space, and within a social background, it is now necessary to investigate those elements of their lives which affected their decision to question the status of women, and the opportunities open to them. These could be roughly defined as 'experience' and 'commitment'. These aspects of the women's lives were much more difficult to quantify, firstly because so many variables were at work for each individual, and secondly, because so little information was available on so many of the women. This was a particular handicap when discussing the experience and commitment of lower middle class and working class women. Some middle class women recorded their life experiences. Commitment involving financial contribution or office holding in organisations was usually recorded and has sometimes survived. However the lives of these particular working class supporters, and their moral, and practical support for organisations is almost entirely lost.

This chapter examines two aspects of the 'experience' of supporters, which made them of value to the leadership in 1866. First it looks at the life experience of some of the women. This generalises some of the points brought up in the introductory chapters where the individual lives of a few rank and file women were presented. As well as the female life cycle of childhood, education, marriage and parenting, the place of ideas and work in their lives was examined. Secondly there is a study of fifty households with women at their head. Family structure, work, class and household were investigated. These heads of household were the women who might most realistically have obtained the vote, and who, it is argued, were most deprived by the lack of it.

1. Individuals, and their life experiences.

In this section aspects of the lives of the women in the Kensington Society and the sample of suffrage petition women were considered. Relationships within the family were explored for their impact on the emergent feminist consciousness. The role of parents, brothers and sisters in childhood was investigated, as was upbringing in the home. The experience of education, particularly in the women's colleges, and the impact of the world outside the home was examined. What private space, and what access to the wider world, (both in Britain and abroad) did these women have? Some role models, among family, friends and teachers were identified. The impact of adolescence and the expectations and

constraints which maturity imposed, for both single and married women, were sought. The place of work in the lives of these women was shown. Finally their feelings of belonging and difference were approached.

Because the information in this section is drawn from relatively limited sources, the conclusions cannot be extrapolated to the whole group. On the other hand the insight which it offers into the lives of some early feminists, and the factors which influenced the causes which they supported added a further dimension to this study. This dimension gave space for the exploration of individuality, as well as experiences common to a generation and class

Little information is available on the relationships of these women with their mothers. Much had to be concluded by implication. When it came to persuading a mother to sign the suffrage petition, for example, there was little evidence of consistency of attitude. Mrs Garrett was apparently not very supportive of her daughter's ambition to become a doctor, but signed the suffrage petition. Emily Davies' mother, on the other hand, assisted her practically in addressing envelopes for her University Local Examinations campaign, and appears to have signed too. One of the most obviously feminist mother daughter combinations of this early period was that of Harriet Taylor Mill (who died in 1858), and her daughter Helen Taylor. In the correspondence of these two there are some incidental insights into the everyday lives of the two women. When Helen was away, attempting to become an actress, her mother huddled over a dying fire in her bedroom, unable to persuade the one servant to come out of her warm kitchen to bring fresh coals to her. Harriet asked her daughter where spices were stored in the kitchen, and Helen replied with minute directions which lead one to believe that the daughter, not the mother, must have been responsible for the domestic running of the household.

As has been seen from the class analysis, the women came from a wide range of homes, ranging from aristocratic to working class. However there was very little information about the circumstances and childhood of women below the professional classes. The 'snapshot' provided by the census was virtually the only source available for other classes. There was actually very little information about childhood in general, and when it occurred in autobiography and memoir, as it nearly always did, it tended to be introduced in the service of narrative, as evidence of the 'child being mother to the woman.' One example of a rather less shaped account was the account of her childhood by Matilda Chaplin. This was written for her children and printed privately.¹ Others were

¹Matilda Adriana Chaplin, Memoir of Mrs Matilda Adriana Chaplin London, Privately printed, 1899.

the childhood diaries of Helen Taylor², and the correspondence of Annette Akroyd (later Mrs Beveridge).³ Other accounts which were quite informative were the memoir of Eliza Ellis by her sister (see chapter 2.), the biography of Annie Keary by her sister,⁴ the biography of Sophia Jex Blake which drew on her archive which has since disappeared⁵, and Frances Power Cobbe's autobiography.⁶ These accounts, though chronicling the unique experience of individuals, can also give some idea of experiences which might have been common to more women in the group.

One aspect of middle class family life in the first half of the nineteenth century, when these women were growing up, was its uncertainty. The death or ill health of the breadwinner, or economic fluctuations, could plunge a family from comfort to near destitution. When Annette Akroyd asked her father in May 1862 to continue to pay for her studies at Bedford College for a further year, this well-to-do man in public life replied:

Most willingly would I make any effort to gratify the wish (proper) of anyone, more so of my beloved children. But my power for work is somewhat impaired, at the time when I feel that the claims of my dear bairns are greater than ever, are increasing, and will continue to do so. Justice to the younger, more helpless ones requires that I make provision for them as though I was about to be taken away from them⁷

As it happened, Edward Akroyd was dead by 1869, by which time his youngest child was only in his early teens. However he did manage to leave all his children the vast sum of ten thousand pounds each. Matilda Chaplin was a widow in 1866, but also the daughter of a widow. In the 1890's she wrote:

My father was a London lawyer of small means, with a large mind and original ideas. The reason we lived in Richmond was, that he and some friends were experimenting with Merino sheep. ...My father used to come home on Saturdays and stay till Mondays... He was extremely careful about our diet; and our health in general was governed by him- my mother thought he knew more about everything than anyone else, and obeyed him in all nursery details in perfect faith. ... My general impression of my mother ...is a tall lady dressed in white, working at

² London School of Economics. Mill Taylor Papers.

³ India Office Library. Beveridge Papers

⁴ Eliza H. Keary. *Memoirs of Annie Keary*. London, Macmillan and Co., 1883.

⁵ Margaret Todd. *Life of Sophia Jex Blake*. London, Macmillan, 1918.

⁶ Frances Power Cobbe. *Life of Frances Power Cobbe by herself*. 2 vols. London, Richard Bentley and Son, 1894.

⁷ India Office Library Beveridge Papers. Mss Eur. C 176/157

children's clothes and telling us stories, often jumping up excitedly about some mischief a child was doing or some noise of breakage.⁸

In 1818 when Matilda Ayrton was five, her father took a post in India, leaving his young family behind. He died there in 1823. Her mother was head of household from his departure, receiving little money from him, and that irregularly. Her father left Kew without any leave taking, just as if he was coming back from Saturday to Monday as usual. He thought it better for his wife to avoid the agony of parting. After his departure she was 'too anxious...to be lively.' and kept a favourite dress unworn, ready for his return. The abandoned mother of three young children had to move out of their house since her children were threatened with typhus, and she had to hire someone to nurse a servant who caught it. After her father left, Matilda and her younger brother did not have a nursery or a sitting room, and their mother was always with the baby. This was even after their return home, so it is possible that their mother used these rooms for lodgers. Generally life was disastrous, 'the cow got wrong, the fowls got into the garden' and her brothers got ringworm :

Of course we all had it. To add to my mother's trouble, it was discovered that the nurse drank, and one day she brought back baby in, as his mother thought, very ill, having fainted dead away. The doctor said he was dead drunk. It was then surmised that he had had many a sip of gin, which accounted for his puny appearance⁹

Matilda was sent to a day school, and there mixed with children of a different class.

I went to a school in the Marylebone Road which I rather enjoyed... I was fond of a baker's daughter who gave me the crumb of a new penny roll to make bread seals with, showed me how to make them and told me to knead the bread with washing blue to colour them.. I remember hearing of the objectionable mixture of classes, but I rather liked that. I heard of things quite new to me, such as "we keep", i.e. we sell so and so, and much that interested me, for they were not ashamed of their shops, and they were as well, or perhaps better dressed than I was, in brighter colours, probably.¹⁰

Mrs Ayrton's parents were supportive, and when Matilda chose to play 'Cops and Robbers' with their cook's son when she visited them, the family decided to send the tomboy to a small boarding school. Her brief account of this experience in a school with eighteen

⁸Maria Adriana Chaplin. Memoir of Mrs M.A. Chaplin written by herself and edited by Holroyd Chaplin. London, Privately printed, 1899. p.5 and p.7

⁹ibid. p. 10.

¹⁰ ibid. p. 11.

boarders sheds some light on a typical business of the middle class woman supporting herself, and the way it could incorporate other single women:

We were never in communication with the servants. There were some three or four big girls, young women in fact, whose friends could not afford to pay the full terms; in consideration of this, they were to make themselves useful, so they had charge of the little ones, as to their clothing, watching over their preparation of lessons, and were responsible for their well doing and obedience.- two were for music practice and to teach beginners.¹¹

Matilda Chaplin was herself widowed, and in 1861 was living in Blandford Square near Barbara Bodichon. She had seven children in their teens and early twenties, and her eldest son, then twenty one, had taken on the role of head of household. Her daughter Matilda Chaplin attended Queen's College, London, attempted to study medicine with Sophia Jex Blake in Edinburgh, then studied in Dublin to become a physician, and took her M D in Paris in 1879. She married her cousin William Ayrton, and her doctoral thesis was on scientific research which she did in Japan while she was there with her husband.¹²

The relationships of women with their fathers were more fully documented, though the picture which emerged was not much more consistent. Eliza Keary describes her sister's relationship with their father thus:

They understood each other so well, these two who represented the Irish side of the family, who both loved their books so tenderly, who thought and dreamed, who lived and met in an ideal upper region exchanging sweet smiles and confidences there over the heads of the drudging world below.¹³

Sophia de Morgan, who was born in 1809, describes how her father taught her Hebrew and some Latin and Greek.¹⁴ Margaret Ellis, one of seven sisters, (four of whom signed the suffrage petition,) described her father, a Quaker 'by conviction as well as by inheritance' in this way:

My father would not allow us to call even a toad 'ugly' because it was the work of a divine hand, nor did he ever like to see us in our games pretend to be blind or lame, thinking that such acting might seem a mockery of trials which God had permitted to so many sufferers.... Our father and mother wore the 'plain dress' and

¹¹ *ibid* p 15.

¹² After Matilda's death, William Ayrton married Hertha Ayrton, Jewish scientist and protégé of Barbara Bodichon.

¹³ Eliza Keary. Memoirs of Annic Keary.

¹⁴ Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan. Three score years and ten, Reminiscences of Sophia De Morgan. ed. Mary E. De Morgan. London, Richard Bently and Sons. 1895. p.13.

used the 'plain language' and their children associated almost entirely with members of their own community. [Her father] led the way by practice rather than precept in those reforms within the Society of Friends which resulted in the gradual disappearance of those outward marks.¹⁵

John Ellis was a well-to-do farmer who invested in railways, campaigned against slavery and was, for a short time, an MP. The lifestyle of his daughters, and their relationship to him were very different to that of Ellen Nichols and her father. When Ellen Nichols completed her studies at Bedford College, she returned home to Petersfield, Hants., to become a daily governess. She described her widowed father and his household to her college friend, Annette Akroyd in June 1866. She must have been in her early twenties at that time

I need hardly tell you that my home is a small one, as is our number, only the Pater, Fred and myself being here now. ... as to my dear Pater, he divides his time between compounding pills and mixtures and thinking on church music... I fancy (perhaps very conceitedly) that father is a little happier for having me settled at home, so I strive to forget the pains of intellectual hunger.¹⁶

Some of these women must have been totally dependent on their fathers for their often vicarious access to the public world. This included not only politics and public issues, but also intellectual stimulation. Eliza Ellis' father, like Elizabeth Pease Nichol's and others, actively involved their daughters in issues like Anti-Slavery, and also explained political issues to them

The loss of a parent during childhood or adolescence was quite common. Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon's mother died when she was only six. Her aunt, Julia Smith came into the family as a beloved mother substitute. She remained close to her foster children, and supportive of Barbara's campaigns even as an old woman. Their mother had been a milliner, never married to their father. He made real efforts to become involved in the upbringing of his motherless children. He organised a progressive education for them, employing as a tutor a teacher from Robert Owen's school at New Lanark. Their father also took them on holidays in a sort of gypsy caravan, and involved them in entertaining his adult guests from an early age. In this way they met many of the Radical politicians of the day, and overheard discussion of, for example, the ejection of women from the 1840 Anti Slavery Convention, which occurred when Barbara Leigh Smith was twelve. Ellen Nichols' mother died when she was ten. She had to take on the housekeeping, and care and education of her two younger brothers. She was sent to Bedford College, possibly

¹⁵Margaret Ellis. Letters and Memories of Eliza Ellis. Leicester. Privately printed, 1883.

¹⁶India Office Library Beveridge Papers

with some sort of scholarship. On her return from college she ran the household, whilst teaching for seven to eight hours a day in several different families. She did not mention servants, and talked of 'actual' housework. It is probable that her earnings were an essential contribution to the family income, if only to pay for her brother's education, when they became too old for her to teach them.

Helen Taylor curtailed her ambitions to become an actress on the death of her mother. Instead she took on a self-denying role as amanuensis to her step-father John Stuart Mill. Death of a father could catapult a quite mature woman, like Frances Power Cobbe into the world with comparatively little income. The death of a brother's wife could involve an unmarried woman (like Annie Keary or Julia Smith) in taking on the maternal role. Julia Smith maintained this role into old age, but Annie Keary had to relinquish her brother's children when he re-married. By this time her own lover had died, and she could no longer hope for a family of her own. The death of a parent in old age could result in hardship or homelessness for single daughters who had remained under the parental roof. For some, like Frances Power Cobbe, or Emily Davies and her mother, the death of a parent or husband could offer previously unavailable freedom to enjoy an independent life.

In the Census enumerator's returns, some women in the sample were living in the paternal home. The example of the Drury family showed what an extended family this might include. In the 1861 Census Louisa and Ellen Drury were aged twenty-six and twenty-seven respectively, lived with their mother and father. He was a Chief Clerk at the War Office. Their elder brother, Louisa's twin, was a barrister, and he and their maternal grandmother shared the home. The family had four female servants living in. However, only three years later, Louisa describes herself as a Professor of Classics¹⁷, and Ellen as a Visiting Governess, on the University Local Examinations Memorial. In the late 1850s Emily Davies had met Barbara Leigh Smith and Dr Chapman at their house, and they were involved with the activities at Langham Place. But clearly later they must have had to contribute to the family finances, possibly as a result of the death of their father.

There was much that parents could do to foster or restrict the intellectual growth, of their daughters. They could also encourage or discourage their independence and enterprise. An example of the control which careful parents (and even older siblings) might exercise over the reading of their daughters is shown by the case of Kate Stanley,

¹⁷The O.E.D. notes that 'Professor' was 'assumed as a grandiose title by teachers and exponents of dancing, jugglery, phrenology etc. 1864.'

later Lady Amberley, when she was eighteen. She wrote to her brother in March and May 1860 telling that she:

...began Mill on Liberty and read the first chapter, but Maude said she wanted the book, although she had already had it six months and she thought it much too old a book for me, very unsuitable and quite beyond me, so Mama remonstrated but when I told her you thought it a good book for be to read she said finish it so when Maude has got through it I shall do so.¹⁸

This was serious reading, but when it came to a novel, censorship was more consistent. 'Papa says I may read the first two volumes of Mill on the Floss and stop there. Mama has not finished it yet, but says I may not read it.'¹⁹

When looking at life choices, rather than everyday interventions, there was evidence of ambivalence in some parents. In the mid 1850s Helen Taylor decided become an actress. This was an ambition which she had nurtured since she was eleven years old. She was dependent on the financial support of her mother, since she had to take lodgings in the town where there was a theatre company, and wait until work was available. There was also the possibility that payment might not be forthcoming, even if she did work. When Helen first left home, chaperoned by her brother, her mother expressed concern and distress at the conflict which the decision had caused between them:

I do not wish to say anything about my feelings or state because I wish you to be wholly uninfluenced by me in all your future proceedings. I would rather die than go through your reproaches for spoiling your life. Whatever happens, let your life be your own free choice henceforth.²⁰

In January 1857, Helen wrote to her mother:

I know and feel how you love me, and that I care very little in comparison about more or less success in the theatre. That could make no difference to my happiness, only to my pleasure; but that you will let me be an actress and still love me, that is happiness to me.²¹

Members of the Radical elite seem to have been very positive towards experiments in independence which their daughter made in the 1850s. On her majority, Barbara Leigh

¹⁸Bertrand and Patricia Russell. eds. The Amberley Papers, The letters and diaries of Lord and Lady Amberley. 2 vols . London, Hogarth Press, 1937. p. 74.

¹⁹ibid. p 77

²⁰London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers . Vol. LI. no. 7 Harriet Taylor Mill to Helen Taylor, November[22-24th?] 1856.

²¹ibid 342.[98-103] Helen Taylor to Harriet Taylor Mill, 27th January 1857.

Smith's father gave her an income of three hundred pounds a year, which she used to set up a co-educational school for children from a range of social class.

Mary and William Howitt were both journalists and periodical publishers. Their daughter Anna Mary was encouraged to paint, and functioned within the supportive environment of a highly literate, artistic middle class intellectual elite. This elite saw themselves as European, and it was to Munich that Anna Mary went to study art. Her letters home were kept by her writer mother and subsequently published.²² Anna Jameson was a family friend, and much of Anna Mary's book deals with the art history which was the older woman's field. Anna Mary's contemporaries and friends were Barbara Leigh Smith, a painter, Adelaide Anne Procter, a poet, and Bessie Rayner Parkes, a writer. Within this intellectual social circle, Anna Mary's stay in Munich was only unusual in that it was accomplished with only one young woman as a companion. Other young women of her acquaintance had also been allowed to travel abroad un-chaperoned. Anna Mary was in an ideal position to find a publisher for her account, and she had a ready market among those other young women of her class who were eager to develop their creativity. Thus her experience in Munich, and the subsequent text describing it were consistent with the experiences and expectations of this radical intellectual elite among the metropolitan middle class. At the same time the book does give some evidence of the impact that the experience of living abroad and alone had on two young women, one of whom supported women's rights campaigns in the next two decades. William Johnson Fox allowed his daughter Eliza to hold ladies life drawing classes in his home. The usually cautious parents of Bessie Rayner Parkes allowed her to travel in Europe accompanied only by Barbara Leigh Smith when both were in their early twenties. Despite financial hardship, Hannah Pipe's mother worked to support her daughter at school, so that she could go on to run her own school. These are individual cases, but at least prove that some middle class parents were prepared to risk encouraging, or at least reluctantly subsidising, enterprises which were unusual for young women of their class. The daughters who experienced such opportunities went on to facilitate wider opportunities for other middle class women

Middle class parents had to make difficult choices between priorities when considering the opportunities they could offer to their daughters and sons. In her evidence to the Taunton Commission, Frances Buss stated the dilemma facing parents who had both sons and daughters. 'In cases where a parent has small means, and has to choose between the education of his sons and daughters, it is clear more immediate results follow

²²Anna Mary Howitt. An Art student in Munich. 2 vols. London, 1853.

from educating the sons.' She argued that this was a false premise. When one of the commissioners, Mr Acland, asked her:

You think that the improvement of female education is not only improvement for the young women themselves, but would have good effect on their brothers and young friends? [she replied] Most certainly. I have found in several cases that girls have influenced their brothers at home to a very great extent. In a course of lessons given to us at the beginning of the year on Economics, the elements of Political Economy, a subject ridiculed by many persons, not only did the girls take up the study willingly, but the brothers who laughed at them at first, afterwards took up the subject with them.²³

Much has been written about the 'genteel' education of middle class women in private schools, and by governesses at home. Among these women, an example of such typical education, (alongside that of Matilda Chaplin in her small boarding school), is Ellen Heaton in Leeds in the early 1820's. Her brother wrote

Our first instructions were entirely given by our mother who was most kind and attentive parent. At five years of age I could read easily; and Ellen was more forward in her learning, even proportionately to her advanced age than I was. When I was five years old, and acquired this preliminary education, Ellen and I were sent to a day school for young children, kept by Mr Langdon, (the Baptist Minister in Leeds of that time.) ..At the end of the first half year, some prizes were given, and Ellen had the first place, and myself the second. ...[when Ellen was ten she] first evinced her imaginative faculty, and her poetical and literary tastes, if I remember right, she was passing the morning in bed for some slight indisposition, when she called for our mother to act as her amanuensis whilst she dictated a poetical composition on the charms of Gateford. ...before this time we had been removed from Mr Langdon's school; Ellen had commenced attendance at Miss Plint's school, and I was sent to a boys school kept by Mr Ball ²⁴

There was evidence that many of these women were keen to continue their education themselves. Barbara Bodichon, her friends and her cousins attended lectures at Queen's College and Bedford College. This enthusiasm did not only apply to the younger women. Sophia de Morgan and Anna Swanwick are both on record as having joined classes when they were available. Before 1835 Sophia de Morgan attended lectures on chemistry 'with experiments' by a William Allen, (whom she had met through her Anti-

²³Schools Inquiry Commission 1867-8 Digest of evidence. Thursday 30th November. Miss Frances Buss. p 252.

²⁴Brian and Dorothy Payne.' Extracts from Dr Heaton's Diaries.' Thoresby Society Publications, vol. LIII, Part 2 No. 117, 1971. p. 145

Slavery activity) which he was giving to a class of young girls.²⁵ Anna Swanwick (born in 1794) was involved with both Bedford College and Queen's College London. She initially entered her name as a student to encourage others, and she was also a lady visitor. In that capacity she attended and enjoyed lectures on mathematics by Professor Newman.²⁶ Ellen Heaton, in 1875 when she was fifty-nine, was often out at University Extension lectures.

Frances Power Cobbe wrote scathingly of her own boarding school education.²⁷ She also continued to study independently for nearly twenty years after leaving school. However, she was proud of the fact that she was at the same time a careful housekeeper. She told of visiting a family, and being shown their collection of fine but very dirty china. The mother of that family had just been telling her off for 'inciting' her girls to study Greek and geometry. She remarked snubbingly to the woman:

Do you know, I always take up all the plates and dishes myself when they have been washed the day after a party, and put them on their proper shelves with my own hands- though I do know a little Greek and geometry.²⁸

As early as 1849, Bessie Parkes placed education within a broader perspective of general progress in a letter to Barbara Leigh Smith:

I do feel so desperately impatient, sometimes at what I think people's folly. One ought to remember their education and how they are much more liberal than their fathers. My Grandfather would have been so narrow 100 years ago, now in spite of his character, the age has given him lots of liberal ideas. 'respectable' folks hold them and he holds them. And about women. The narrow people used to say 'let her have nothing', now the same set say 'let her learn in private' and we think 'let her learn, however privately. She will do the rest herself, the weapons once in her hands' It is the private learning the narrow ones have long allowed that has brought on these college days. We would often be frightened at the good we are preparing if we knew it.²⁹

This perception of learning as a weapon for women to fight their subordination runs through much of the writing of these women, and is recognised as crucial by their biographers and memorialists. Political economy, chemistry, mathematics, Greek and

²⁵Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan. Three score years and ten.

²⁶Mary Louisa Bruce. Anna Swanwick, a memoir and recollections 1813-1899. London, T. Fisher Unwin, 1903.

²⁷ quoted in Janet Horowitz Murray. Strong Minded Women and other lost voices from 19th century England. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books 1982. There are other relevant extracts alongside Cobbe's account.

²⁸Frances Power Cobbe op. cit.

²⁹Girton College. Bessie Rayner Parkes Papers V 33/1 1849

Latin, are seen to give access to the wider world. Whether in biography or autobiography, the twin themes of looking over the garden wall into the boys school, and the struggle for self education, surface frequently. Thirsting and hungering after education, as Hannah Pipe suggested, was the dynamic for much of the other activity undertaken by Kensington Society members, and the women who signed the suffrage petition. The motto of the Girls' Public Day School Company, founded by women who signed the petition³⁰ was 'Knowledge is no more a fountain sealed'. As has already been shown in Chapter Four, this decade of feminism involved many teachers. It also involved many women desperate to learn, and through learning to gain control over their lives.

Education was also important for social bonding. The shared experiences of school or college made friendships possible. These could transcend geography, and could last for a lifetime. These friendships were important as another element in the networks of support used in later years. Elizabeth Garrett met the Crow sisters at Miss Browning's school in Blackheath. Elizabeth Garrett's home was in Suffolk, the Crows' home was in Gateshead. Through the Crow sisters she met Emily Davies (who did not go away to school). Jane Crow came to London and was involved in Langham Place activities with Emily Davies and for a while lived with Elizabeth Garrett. The eldest Crow sister became one of the early Mistresses of Girton College.

There was a camaraderie among young women who had inadequate education. They often seem to have co-operated in self education. The early letters of Bessie Parkes and Barbara Bodichon illustrate this process. They recommended books to each other, lent them, wrote critiques, and responded to the comments of the other. Ellen Nichols and Annette Akroyd were at Bedford College together. Their correspondence was full of mutual encouragement to continue learning. They compared notes on their reading, or lack of it, and offer to send books to each other. They harked back with nostalgia to their time together as boarders at Bedford Square. But this is not just a two way correspondence. Both girls remained in touch with Miss Thomas, the Welsh Lady Resident, who ran the boarding facility, and with Miss Bostock, one of the founders of the college. Through the encouragement of these women, Annette Akroyd returned to the college to take further examinations, and both young women joined the Kensington Society. Miss Bostock and Miss Thomas also used the younger women, at home in Hampshire and Worcestershire, to look out for recruits for the college. They asked them to find young women of ability who would like to attend the college, but who might not

³⁰ These Founders included Maria Grey, Emily Shirreff and Emilia Gurney

be able to afford it. Mrs Reid and her sister gave financial assistance to needy pupils, and clearly relied on their past students to use their judgement to assess suitable candidates.

The complex networks of connection between students, teachers, lady visitors and committee members of both Queen's and Bedford colleges would repay closer scrutiny. Queen's College provided three of the first cohort of medical students who attempted to qualify at Edinburgh; Sophia Jex Blake, Emily Bovell and Matilda Chaplin. To make the attempt with old friends must have made the rigours of the campaign slightly easier to bear. At least twelve women who had connections with Bedford College signed the suffrage petition, and that figure does not include many working teachers who may have been students there. Four of the founders or administrative staff, three Lady Visitors, and four former students signed.

One of these ex-students was the remarkable African-American, Sarah P. Remond, whose hungering and thirsting after education led her to London from New York in the late 1850's³¹ She signed the suffrage petition in 1866, prior to her departure for Florence, where she qualified as a physician and practised for twenty years. She was the daughter of freed slaves, and her elder brother had come to the 1840 Anti-Slavery Convention in London with the American delegation. She herself had campaigned against slavery in America, and had attended the Seneca Falls women's rights convention. When she came to England, she stayed at first with Mrs Reid, and continued her education at Bedford College. She travelled the country lecturing on the wrongs of slavery to audiences of all classes. She was apparently a compelling public speaker who impressed her audiences with her grace and conviction. In 1861 she gave a paper at the NAPSS Meeting on American Slavery and its influence in Great Britain. As well as staying with Mrs Reid, she also lived for a time with Clementia Taylor, and it was there that she met Frances Power Cobbe as well as many other prominent reformers.³²

³¹I am grateful to Clare Midgley for unpublished information on Sarah Remond. A brief autobiography is to be found in Matthew Davenport Hill. Our exemplars poor and rich, Biographical sketches of men and women who have benefited their fellow creatures. London. Blackwood and Son, 1880. Extracts reprinted in the English Woman's Journal No 7 1861 pp 269-75.

³²Frances Power Cobbe mentions her when telling an amusing story about Mary Carpenter:

I was one in her company at Aubrey House in London, when there happened to be present half a dozen people, each one devoted to some special political, religious or moral agitation. Miss Carpenter remarked, in a pause in the conversation "it is a thousand pities that everybody will not join and give the whole of their minds to the great cause of the age, because, if they would, we should carry it undoubtedly." "What is the great cause of the age?" we simultaneously exclaimed. "Parliamentary reform?" said our host Mr Peter Taylor. "The abolition of slavery?" said Miss Remond a negress. Mrs Taylor's companion: "Tectotalism?" said another; "Woman's suffrage?" said another. "The conversion of the world to Theism?" said I. In the midst of the clamour Miss C looked serenely around. "Why the Industrial Schools Bill, of course!". Nobody enjoyed the joke, when we all began to laugh, more than the reformer herself. [Frances Power Cobbe. Life]

There were few opportunities for making a private space for personal development, but there is some evidence for this being valued. Barbara Bodichon, when she had her own money to dispose of, chose to spend some of it on building a 'mediaeval' house near Robertsbridge. The environment she created was very simple, even austere (and for some of her guests uncomfortable), but her hospitality was warm, and she used this personal space to welcome friends in an informal atmosphere. In a family of sisters, Eliza Ellis managed to find a disused corner of a dairy to make into a museum for her fossil collection. Like Sophia Jex Blake, she also made little gardens 'civilising' odd corners of the farm. The large house in which Frances Power Cobbe lived allowed her more scope for creating a private world, which she remembered and described vividly decades later. Her lessons ended at twelve o'clock, and then she was free to roam.

I had a play house of my own for wet days. There were at that time two garrets only in the house, (the bedrooms having all lofty coved ceilings) and these two garrets over the lobbies were altogether disused. I took possession of them, and kept the keys lest anybody should pry into them, and truly they must have been a remarkable sight! On the sloping roofs I pinned the eyes of my peacock's feathers in the relative positions of the stars of the chief constellations, one of my hobbies being Astronomy. On another wall I fastened a rack full of carpenters tools, which I could use pretty deftly on the bench beneath. The principal wall was an armoury of old court swords and home made pikes, decorated with green and white flags, (I was an Irish patriot at that epoch), sundry javelins, bows and arrows and a magnificently painted shield with the family arms. On the floor of one room was a collection of shells from the neighbouring shore and lastly there was a table with pens, ink and paper ³³

She was fortunate to have such a space as a child, both physically and in terms of time away from domestic responsibilities. As an adult, even though she took care of the best china, her domestic tasks allowed her ample time to study from the age of sixteen to the time of her father's death when she was thirty-five.

As will be shown in the second part of this chapter, living alone was apparently not an option for the single women. The example of Miss Jane Crow serves to illustrate the variety of places in which one women might choose (or be forced) to live. With her sister, she was at school with the Garrett sisters at Miss Browning's school in Blackheath, and was a friend of Emily Davies at Gateshead. In 1858, when she was twenty-six, she accompanied Emily Davies and her sick brother to Algeria. There she also met the Leigh-Smith sisters who inspired both young women to work for women's rights, and who made

³³Frances Power Cobbe. *Life*. p. 48.

them aware of what was being done at Langham Place. By 1861 Jane Crow (then Secretary of the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women) was living at Langham Place with Matilda Hays and Emily Faithfull. In 1864 she was living with Emily Faithfull in Taviton Street, and was about to move with her to Grosvenor Street. In 1865 she moved with Elizabeth Garrett to 20, Upper Berkeley Street, where she remained until her friend's marriage. Jane Crow is one of those supporters about whom little is recorded. She, like Bella and Anne Leigh Smith, was an eager supporter of the Langham Place enterprises. Unlike them she chose to move to London, and worked in practical ways for the cause of women, alongside the most active campaigners of the period.

Many of these women, like Jane Crow had some experience of a wider world, though some only travelled in England to visit relatives, or to places like the Hydropathic spa at Ben Rhydding for their health. Some families attended the NAPSS Meetings. The London season brought provincial families to town, to attend parties, concerts, and attraction such as the Crystal Palace or exhibitions. The diaries of Annette Akroyd recorded a quiet life in Stourbridge, with a little voluntary teaching, 'tracting' and various forms of rural sociability such as croquet parties, picnics, drives and walks, and some amateur dramatics. For one or two weeks each year she visited London, and her diary became packed with activity, as she returned to Bedford College to take examinations, and see her friends. In July 1867 her activities included a croquet party, 'She Stoops to Conquer' at a girls school, a 'Working Man's Soiree' [presumably at the Working Men's College], a visit to Crystal Palace to see a sultan, singing classes and a Freed Negro meeting³⁴

Travel abroad was often a formative experience for women. Frances Power Cobbe travelled as soon as her father died. She rejoiced:

to think that I saw those holy and wonderful lands of Palestine and Egypt while Cooks tourists were yet unborn, and Cairo had only one small English hotel and one solitary wheel carriage, and the solemn gaze of the sphinx encountered no golf games on the desert sands

Both Harriet Martineau and Amelia Blandford Edwards also travelled to Egypt. The latter came back to England determined to encourage the study of the ancient Egyptians, and is credited as being the founder of the discipline of Egyptology.³⁵ In the Winter of 1858,

³⁴India Office Library, Beveridge Papers.

³⁵For the impact of ancient Egypt on some Victorian women travellers, including Amelia Edwards and Harriet Martineau, who both signed the suffrage petition, see Joan Rees, *Writings on the Nile*, London, Rubicon Press, 1995.

Annie Keary was taken to Egypt because of her delicate lungs. She had devoted many years to caring for her brother's children, and her parents, meanwhile struggling to become a serious author. Her sister describes this trip to Egypt as 'Her one flight into the world...every circumstance connected with it shone brightly in her recollection to the last days of her life'³⁶ There is a deep ambivalence in this phrase 'flight into the world'. From what did she fly but duty and service, and yet the world was somehow alien to the homely centre of her life. Ellen Heaton, on the other hand:

Being of independent means and without family commitments...was able to travel widely on the continent, living for many months at a time in London[sic] and Rome In 1867 she visited Russia and Poland, where she stayed in Moscow, St Petersburg and Warsaw. She frequently attended meetings of the British Association, and over the years must have visited most parts of the British Isles.³⁷

The significance of Emily Davies' visit to Algiers has already been mentioned. Barbara Bodichon had a home there after her marriage and, as at Scalands in Sussex, her friends were welcome to visit. Eliza Bridell Fox and other artists went to stay with her, as well as other campaigning friends. Italy and France and Germany were frequent destinations, and feminists would seek out examples of women's work or education to write up for the English Woman's Journal or the NAPSS Meetings. The strong European dimension to feminism went back to the earlier generation, and the Howitts, and their circle were in contact with French women, including the expatriate Mme Mohl, who had a salon in Paris³⁸

The self-discovery which was a consequence of travel, particularly independent travel, and the marketability of the experience of travel were two other aspects of the experience which were valued by these women. Barbara Bodichon relished her visit to America, with the opportunities she had to talk to slaves and working class Americans. She described herself as:

One of the cracked people of the world, and I like to herd with the cracked, such as A M H [Anna Mary Howitt] and B.R.P. [Bessie Rayner Parkes], queer Americans, democrats, socialists, artists, poor devils or angels, and am never happy in a genteel family life. I long to do it like other people, but long always to be off on some wild adventure, or long to lecture on a tub in St Giles, or to go to

³⁶Eliza Keary Memoirs of Annie Keary. p. 91.

³⁷ Brian and Dorothy Payne. 'Extracts from Dr Heaton's Diaries.' p. 141

³⁸Kathleen O'Meara. Madam Mohl, her salon and her friends: a Study in Social Life in Paris. London, Richard Bently and Son., 1885.

see the Mormons, or ride off into the interior on horseback alone, and leave the world for a month.³⁹

Like the women explorers of the Victorian period, (none of whom appear to have signed the petition), feelings of difference seem to have drawn women like Barbara Bodichon and Bessie Parkes to places where their unconventionality was perceived simply as foreign-ness, and tolerated, or where their perception of their own racial superiority allowed them to ignore the censure of the indigenous people. Both women married Frenchmen and lived abroad for a part of their lives. As early as 1849, however, Bessie Parkes was discussing her feelings of difference in letters to her friend:

. I do feel so totally differently from all about me, and so must you, except your father and the Howitts that sometimes I feel quite mystified and wonder how I ever came to think these things ...Year by year, conventional scales seem to fall from my eyes ⁴⁰

The role of older women has already been discussed, but within this context, the role model of a sympathetic older woman was especially important. Where the feelings of difference prompted action to change the situation, the mentor could also mediate the process of change. Helen Taylor, for example wanted to travel out of her class, into the world of the theatre. The actress, Fanny Stirling, who taught her, negotiated work for her in small provincial theatre companies. She gave her detailed instructions on how to dress on stage, and the niceties of theatrical etiquette when dealing with managers and colleagues. *But she also became friendly with Harriet Taylor Mill, and acted as an intermediary between Helen and her mother.* Shortly before Harriet Taylor Mill's final journey to France, Fanny Stirling wrote to her of the three-cornered relationship between the role model, the alienated daughter and the uncomprehending mother.

Helen, who should be the object of interest between us, and whom I believe we both love, though differently, is, I fancy, rather a stumbling block, for I am always fancying you may feel that but for me this passion of hers might die a natural death or merge into something else- *This feeling too leads me to speak of it with her as little as possible-* I cannot talk to her of it [i.e. a theatrical career] hopefully and cheerfully when I know that my words would be like a blow to you. She too, poor girl, feels like Desdemona such a divided duty- She loves you too well to leave you and yet longs with all her strength for what she dreams is an artistic and happy

³⁹Sheila R Herstein A mid-Victorian Feminist, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon. Yale, Yale University Press 1985. p. 21.

⁴⁰Girton College, Bessie Rayner Parkes Papers V 33 1 1849

life. So we are all constrained together, none of us pleasing the other, however what pleases her I feel must give you pain.⁴¹

The need for a role model was also supplied for their friends by younger women. The experience of adolescence and young womanhood was eased for young women like Bessie Parkes and Barbara Bodichon by the knowledge that they had a close friend who understood their aspirations.⁴² A typical comment by Bessie Parkes to her friend was the following, written when she was twenty:

I have been buying Howitt's Journal There is a healthy, hopeful, vigorous truth in all Mary Howitt writes. I am so much obliged to you for taking me to see her; I shall never forget it; it left a tail of hopeful light, like a comet, behind it. ⁴³

Ellen Nichols remembered her college days in a sentimental glow seven years later, recalling the 'happiest term' and relishing having her friend to speak to 'all to myself'. While still at college she wrote to her friend Annette Akroyd during the vacation:

How very jolly for you to have settled down straight off!....My great dread is lest I should settle down into a melancholy dreaming the state in which I generally find myself at the end of the 'long' [vacation]. Miss Thomas told me she thought it was my besetting sin, and she is quite right...I wonder if I shall feel as queer over the teaching of strangers as you do with your brothers and sisters...you have done me any amount of good since I have been at college.⁴⁴

Marriage brought many into partnerships which were supportive and encouraging. Barbara Bodichon's doctor husband was tolerant of her wandering lifestyle, Elizabeth Garrett was able to practice her profession as well as having children, Josephine Butler's husband supported her throughout the notorious Anti Contagious Diseases Acts campaign. Elizabeth Wolstenholme had a co-operative relationship which only became a marriage when she was six months pregnant. Jacob and Ursula Bright, Alice Westlake and her husband, Mrs and Mrs Frank Malleon, are only a few of the couples who went on to support suffrage together.

Charlotte Manning's second husband gave valued advice on the wording of the suffrage petition. Setting out on a marriage, she was strictly supervised by her father. Her

⁴¹London School of Economics, Mill Taylor Papers, Vol. LIV, no. 23.

⁴²See Jane Rendall. 'Friendship and Politics, Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon (1827-91) and Bessie Rayner Parkes (1829-1925)' in Susan Mendus and Jane Rendall, Sexuality and Subordination: Interdisciplinary Studies of Gender in the Nineteenth Century. London, Routledge, 1989.

⁴³Girton College, Bessie Rayner Parkes Papers, V 28/1, Nov. 9th, 1848.

⁴⁴India Office Library, Beveridge Papers. Ellen Nichols to Annette Akroyd, 10th July, 1864.

brother, Henry Solly recalled. 'My father... put the gentleman who asked him for my sister's hand to rather severe proof of his ability to maintain her in the rank to which she had been born.'⁴⁵ Matilda Chaplin's mother disapproved of her fiancée, and she went to live with his family who supported her, until she was old enough to marry. The account by William Lovett of his wife illustrates the way in which women were seen primarily in terms of their relationship to the men of their family. He describes the woman to whom, by his own account, he was devoted as the daughter of a carpenter and her brother at that period being in business in Boulogne she went over to be his housekeeper, until he himself married, when she became a lady's maid in an English family.⁴⁶

Harriet Grote lost her only child, and in 1836 wrote to her sister about her:

'struggles against the ills of maternal life. I quite agree with you that such work would harass me woundily and this serves to console me for being 'sans enfants'⁴⁷

Her husband's infidelity also caused problems in their marriage. In 1840 she wrote to another sister in Sweden that.

A terrible blight has hung over us...Political affairs have died out and left us stranded Some matters of a personal and private nature have imparted a deep undercurrent of melancholy to our lives and the only cheering thing I have to say is, that we continue to afford each other the tenderest support and comfort in all weathers⁴⁸

Mary de Morgan described her father's relationship vis-à-vis her mother's feminist views.

Although my father did not entirely share my mother's views on the point of the need for higher training and political emancipation for women, she succeeded in inducing him to give a course of lectures to the first pupils at Bedford College and also to join the movement for procuring female suffrage.⁴⁹

There is some evidence of the way in which these women performed as parents. One negative account comes from Bessie Parkes' daughter Marie Belloc Lowndes, who was critical of her mother's inability to retain the friends of her youth after she lost her

⁴⁵Henry Solly These Eighty Years, or the story of an unfinished life. London, Simpkin and Marshall, 1893.

⁴⁶William Lovett. The Life and struggles of William Lovett in his pursuit of bread knowledge and freedom with some short account of the different associations he belonged to and of the opinions he entertained London, Trubner and Co., 1876. p.36.

⁴⁷Thomas Herbert Lewin. The Lewin letters. London, Printed for private circulation, 1909. p 339.

⁴⁸ibid p. 363

⁴⁹Sophia Elizabeth De Morgan. Three score years and ten. p. xxxvi.

money. That the arch-feminist's son, Hilaire Belloc, should become an anti-suffragist was a particularly cruel irony. One glimpse of a mother laying down her principles for child care occurs among the letters of Lady Amberley. She wrote to a prospective governess:

My eldest child...the boy of 6...is intensely active minded...the girl is 3 and rather backward...both are strong and healthy children...The boy sleeps in my room- the girl wd sleep with you- both get up at 1/2 6 and are with me from 7 to 8 at 8 breakfast with me at 1/4 to 9 go out till 12 or 1 part of the time on a pony that they ride in turn & part of the time alone- I like them to be much alone and unwatched. at 1.30 they dine with us, and often go out with us after at 5 have tea with us and stay with their father till near 6 at 7 go to bed. ...They make their own beds fold up their own things at night and on coming home & I like and care for them to learn to be useful & independent as much as anything else- work of all sorts is to be taught them as necessary and desirable.⁵⁰

Alongside the opportunity to obtain quality education, a twin feature of these women's lives was work, either as a means of subsistence, or as a way to gain independence. Innovators like Emily Davies and Elizabeth Garrett were often applied to for advice by young women seeking employment, and it is clear from the following letter, that they were very aware of the importance of only encouraging those young women who would be a credit to the cause. In June 1865, Elizabeth Garrett wrote to Emily Davies about Miss Colborne

A Miss Colborne called on me on Saturday *aet* 23. Wants to study medicine... Her letter was remarkably illiterate in writing and neatness. I expect you would condemn her utterly if you saw it...She has rather a good face, and I found had read more than I could have imagined from her letter....She is keen about women, though crude and dogmatic below her years on this as on other things. I want you to see her- could you have her to tea? I would come with pleasure and I think we cd find out how far she is worth encouraging.⁵¹

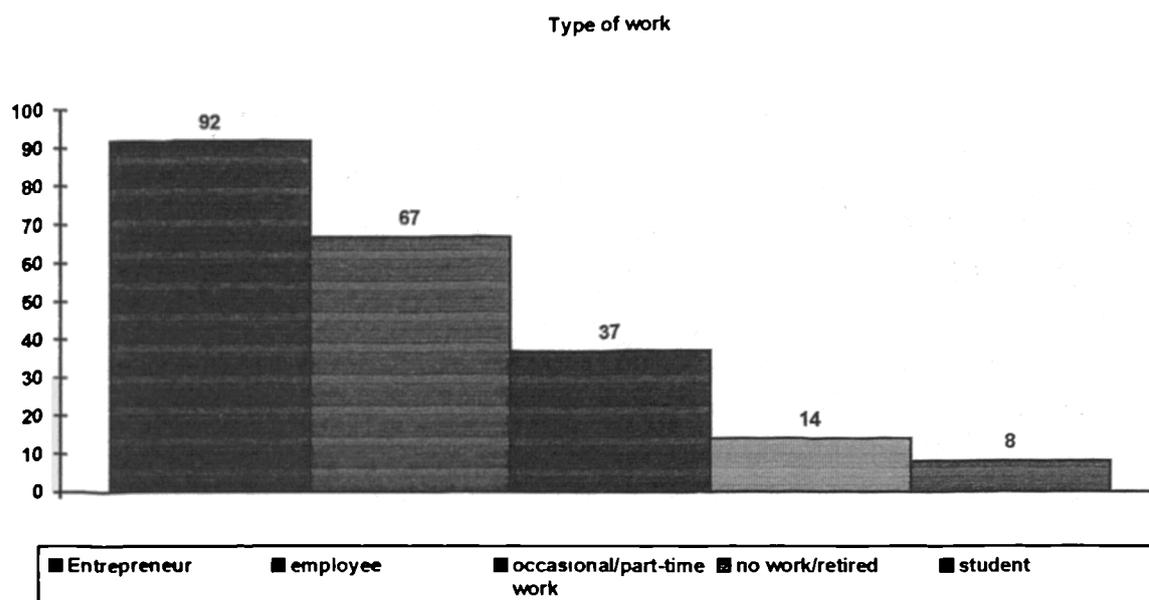
It was possible to establish the place of work in the lives of two hundred and eighteen women who signed the suffrage petition. The majority were entrepreneurs, many of whom were school Principals. They were wholly responsible for their enterprise, and often employed several people (a more detailed examination of some of these enterprises will be found in the second part of this chapter) The second category was that of full time employee, working for someone else in a school, or shop, in a factory, or as a domestic

⁵⁰Bertrand and Patricia Russell. The Amberley Papers. p.415, 8th October, 1871. Bertrand Russell's parents and their two elder children discussed here, died when he was a small child.

⁵¹Girton College, Emily Davies Papers ED 32 June 1865

worker. The third category was that of part time work. This included the professional journalism of women like Frances Power Cobbe, Eliza Lynn Linton and Sophia Dobson Collet, and occasional writing, painting, etc., by which women eked out a living, or supplemented a private income. Fourteen women were found to have no work, or to be retired, and eight were either college or medical students.

Chart 5a Place of work in the lives of 218 women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition



The preponderance of entrepreneurs probably reflects the priorities of those collecting the petition who focused on women heads of household. It also ignores the 'lost' women, whose dependent circumstances, mobility, or employee status have rendered them and their occupations invisible. Some of those 'on the record' were women who worked because they wanted to, and what they said reflects either the desirability of earning for the independence it gave, or the impact of receiving money for work. When she was nineteen Bessie Parkes wrote to Barbara Bodichon of the possibility of selling drawings to native Indian Princes. 'There is a way one might get money according to our great desire. I hope to earn my bread before I die, don't you?'⁵² Helen Taylor wrote to her mother of her feelings after having received her first pound from the treasury for her acting

⁵²Girton College, Parkes Papers V 11/1 29/7/47

It would have been very pleasant to feel that I had actually earned some money by my useless self (though only by doing nothing) if I were sure you did not dislike it, dearest. I hope you do not my sweet mama. You cannot think how strongly I felt the difference between that dirty stuff and those pretty notes which come in your nice letters folded in your beautiful handwriting and seeming to me like fairy money to have some of the charm of the sender still about it.⁵³

Helen sent her mother regular accounts of her spending, which give an indication of the expenses which had to be borne by an actress in advance of receiving (or not as might be the case) her salary.

Lodgings 16/-, provisions 17/3d, servant at lodgings 1/-, journey to and from Newcastle 5/9d. [to another theatre where the company was playing] writing paper, stamps, playbills and candles 3/8d., ordinary dress, (including washing) 4 3d, Theatrical dress including...buying a looking glass, carrying box to theatre, satin dress and petticoat 2..13..5d Spent this week 5..1..5d

A few weeks earlier the realities for the working actresses became clearer to her when the manager was refused a licence and had to pay off his actors. 'I felt it impossible to take the poor man's money where so many of the others, really poor, were in such dreadful anxiety as to whether they should get their full salaries.'⁵⁴

Many more of the working women in this sample would have shared the stress of Ellen Nichols' working day.

I have three children (aetat cir. 12, 10, 7.) to teach every morning except Sat. for two and a half hours, and a few lessons to give besides, then there is the weight of *keeping everything at home in order, on my shoulders, and at the present moment* the care of looking after a friend who is staying with us and who is afflicted with one of those miserable maladies...so you may guess, that when I have prepared for my children, I have done with books for the day...[in a later letter she wrote] Three small boys are my pupils. Nothing is more trying to my patience and temper than those miserable half hours of music. Next to them comes the torture of hearing children read words of one syllable...after these two horrors I would place the multiplication tables, geography and history, with Philosophy made easy, I like very much and on the whole think teaching very pleasant work. [three months later, in March 1865 she wrote:] Every day except Saturday and Sunday I do about the same thing. Breakfast and housekeeping, practically, of course, till 10 then lessons, with the exception of an hour till almost six. After that tea and Fred's [her brother's] music, and then various things until father comes to supper and to be amused until bedtime...on Saturday I have a half holiday and generally spend it with my only friend here and we manage to have some good fun.

⁵³London School of Economics, Mill Taylor Papers Vol. LI 106 30/1/57

⁵⁴ibid. 84 18 1 57

Saturday evening I devote to 'mending' On Sunday go to Ch. read a little poetry, walk and talk and play to father...Do you think my mode of life likely to convert me into...a cabbage? [in May 1865] I too have a new pupil;- the little brother of some of my old children. He comes to say his letters and to write m's and always finishes by saying "I dot veddy dood today?"...he is not five yet;- but I give him very homeopathic doses of learning...I should like greatly to go abroad- when I get rich enough I should not at all mind going to some German College and working hard for six months or so. But I don't know who's to take care of father...⁵⁵

The career of another Kensington Society member, Mary Eliza Porter shows that this pattern of hard work could continue for a whole lifetime, with little stability of employment, even for a school Principal. She went from Queen's College to a school for training governesses at Bolham, near Tiverton. She first taught art, and then became Principal This school was visited for the Taunton Commission. Mary Eliza Porter was one of four teachers, and her salary was sixty-five pounds. The school was open for forty-two weeks a year, and pupils were in school thirty-three hours a week, including part of music practice Three-quarters of lessons were prepared out of school, and sixteen hours a week were allowed for exercise. This was a boarding school with a small 'practice' class of children from the locality for pupils to teach. In March 1866⁵⁶ she told the Commissioners that there were forty pupils, who were the daughters of professional men who had been reduced in circumstances. Of the 200 girls she had taught in her six years there, 115 had found work as governesses. They usually came after the age of sixteen, and some were twenty-three and twenty-four. She described her new school for day boarders at Gateshead which she was about to take over. It was a private school, with thirty pupils who were the children of large manufacturers, the higher class of tradesmen and the professional class Later she was the first head teacher of the first Girls' Public Day School Company school at Chelsea. She moved on to other girls' schools, including Bedford Girls' School, ending her career at Bradford Girls' Grammar School where she was first Head when it opened in 1875, remaining there until 1880.

Part-time work such as illustration, journalism and short story writing was often anonymous Bessie Parkes and Barbara Bodichon had articles published in the provincial press in the 1850's, but they were difficult to identify. An incidental insight into the different media employed by women to earn money appeared in an advertisement on the back of Sophia Dobson Collet's G.D.Holyoake and modern Atheism, written in 1855:

⁵⁵India Office Library, London. Beveridge papers. Letters from Ellen Nichols to Annette Akroyd 'Xmas eve' 1864, 1st March 1865; 4th May 1865.

⁵⁶Schools Inquiry Commission Minutes of evidence 14th March 1866 pp. 625-632

Musical compositions by S[ophia]D[obson]C[ollet]. St. Agnes. Soprano song based on Tennyson. The Grand Panjandrum - a comic madrigal for five voices. "Great amusement was produced by the strange incongruities and nonsensical babbling of this little production, every change in it being distinctly marked by accompanying change in the measure." Published by Novello.⁵⁷

Many of those women who recorded their feelings at all, recorded feelings of difference and awareness of the incomprehension with which they were regarded by many around them. A particularly poignant expression of such feelings was this letter from Helen Taylor to a friend:

I can well enter into your feelings for when I lost my mother, I felt as you do and though it is now eleven years ago, I feel so still. The solitude you so touchingly speak of in your letter is not an accident, but a necessary part of the existence of all those who combine with any warmth of feeling, opinions different to those of the majority of society. To be alone in the world is their destiny, however rich they may be, or surrounded with friends and relatives, unless there is some one person for more than one it is indeed unlikely there will ever be who is the true, intimate and inner friend.⁵⁸

Stepping into the public world must have required great courage, even if it was for a simple meeting in a public place. Eliza Ellis wrote to her confidant Hannah Lucas of waiting for her father at St Paul's Cathedral, experiencing a feeling of 'perfect loneliness', and trying to assume 'as much independence and importance as possible.'⁵⁹ Literature could provide sustenance in the absence of sympathetic friends. Sophia Jex-Blake, who was a member of the Kensington Society, but who was abroad when the Suffrage petition was collected, wrote in 1862

There never was such a book as Jane Eyre- of its kind. Talk of 'finding'- that finds me through and through continually. How people dare speak ill of such a book- I suppose they simply can't understand it. Its grand steadfastness and earnestness and purity is something glorious. I read and re-read it as I never could another novel, and how it helps one.⁶⁰

Alongside the ambitions to write and paint and change the world, there was also a hint of disappointment, of burn-out, as the enthusiasts aged, and ill health or poverty restricted

⁵⁷Sophia Dobson Collect. G.D.Holyoake and modern Atheism. London, Trubner and Co., 1855. British Library copy.

⁵⁸*ibid* Vol XIII no. 135. Draft letter from Helen Taylor to Philippine Kylan, November 1869

⁵⁹See page 72.

⁶⁰Margaret Todd Sophia Jex Blake op. cit. p.108

their range. Even younger women became frustrated by the enormity of the tasks which they had set themselves. Barbara Bodichon wrote to William Allingham as early as 1862:

I love my art more than ever- in fact more in proportion to other lives than ever for I confess the enthusiasm with which I used to leave my easel and go to teach at the school, or help Bessie in her affairs is wearing off, and if it were not that at thirty-five one has acquired habits which happily cannot be broken I should not go on as I do, I could not begin as I used to ten years ago at any of these dusty dirty attempts to help one's poor fellow creatures, and it is quite natural that my life abroad should make me more enterprising for boar hunts or painting excursions, than for long sojourns in stifling rooms with miserable people.⁶¹

Harriet Grote expressed larger regrets about her life, and blamed the fact that she was born a woman for her failures. In 1854 she wrote:

I become more and more conscious of the prodigious disproportion which has existed between my original capacity, both for enjoyment and the giving of joy to others I brought into the world a fairy godmother's endowment, nothing less, and I have never been in a condition to turn this splendid heritage to its full account. This often depresses me and I ponder the mysterious dispensations under which life is distributed so as to make every woman's lot a penn'orth and nothing but a penn'orth after all, without seeing any way out of the maze other than by lamenting that I was ever born a woman.⁶²

These women, in spite of the conventional middle class experiences of childhood, education, marriage, motherhood, and work, seem to have had feelings of exclusion, and strangeness. They found that education, and serious personal study, discussion and friendship, the quest for 'steadfastness, earnestness and purity' set them apart from many of their acquaintances and their family. They sought private space and braved public meetings. Kensington Society member Mary Eliza Porter responded briskly to a letter in the Daily Chronicle which suggested that the High School movement was 'hailed with joy from its beginning'

As one of the pioneers of the movement, declared Miss Porter, 'I beg to differ. We had to strive for years against continual opposition...I have grounds for thinking that the work of the present headmistresses [she was writing in the

⁶¹Helen Allingham and D. Radford, eds. William Allingham a diary. Harmondsworth, Penguin Books, 1985, p 79.

⁶²Lewin The Lewin Letters op. cit. p.150.

1900's] is of a higher character than that of the former generation, for we, alas! did not enjoy the advantages which they have had in preparation for their work.'⁶³

Inclusion in an organisation was one way in which women could share each other's strengths and discover the advantages and pitfalls of working together. They could use their diverse talents for the creation of working organisations. Emily Davies once wrote out a committee list with, beside each name, the particular 'power' of each member. After an examination of the apparently 'powerless' single women and widows, the following chapter will explore those organisations to which these women gave their 'power'.

2. Respectable, orderly and independent: Female heads of household who signed the 1866 suffrage petition.*

A key group of women is mentioned by Barbara Bodichon in the opening paragraph of her paper Reasons for the Enfranchisement of Women (written some time in 1866)

That a respectable, orderly, independent body in the state should have no voice, and no influence recognised by the law, in the election of the representatives of the people, while they are otherwise acknowledged as responsible citizens, are eligible for many public offices and required to pay all taxes, is an anomaly which seems to require some explanation....Among the instances of hardship traceable directly to exclusion from the franchise and to no other cause may be the unwillingness of landlords to accept women as tenants. ... Women, as heads of a business or a household fulfil the duties of a man in the same position. Their task is often a hard one, and everything which helps to sustain their self respect, and to give them consideration and respect in the eyes of others is likely to lessen their difficulties, and make them happier and stronger for the battle of life. ⁶⁴

The petition itself points out the:

⁶³Josephine Kamm Indicative Past, a hundred years of the Girls' Public Day School Trust London, George Allen and Unwin 1975 p. 57.

* See Appendix 2 for chart with details of the women in the sample of heads of household.

⁶⁴Candida Ann Lacey Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group pp. 104-111.

Evident anomaly that some holders of property are allowed to use this right [to vote] while others, forming no less a constituent part of the nation, and equally qualified by law to hold property, are not able to exercise this privilege⁶⁵

This section seeks to explore what it meant to be head of household, without access to the power to which Bodichon refers. Most of the fifty women in this sample of female heads of household appear only in the petition and in either the 1861 or 1871 Census. The situations existing in those households therefore refer to either of those dates, except in the case of one household, that of Laleham School, the description of which occurred in the biography of its Principal Hannah Pipe.⁶⁶ The census returns were interrogated to discover the age of the women, their occupation and marital status, and indications of family size, their situation as employers and providers of residential accommodation. Their circumstances at those dates can be considered, but there is little other evidence available to flesh out the picture of their lives. The experience of Matilda Adriana Chaplin (in the previous section of this chapter) provided a striking example of the changing role of women over three generations, from the helpless abandoned wife of the 1820's, to the young married professional woman of the 1880's, through Matilda Adriana Chaplin herself, with her insecure childhood, and her careful preparation of her own daughter for independence through education.

Of the 297 women who gave the title 'Mrs' in the suffrage petition, 128 had a husband living, and fifty four were known to be widowed. The situation of the other 115 was not known. The marital status of nearly two thirds of the women who signed the petition is not known. In Manchester, out of forty-two households where the head is known, only eighteen had male heads, twenty four had women at their head, and a further four women who signed lived in households headed by women. A similar situation in Nottingham and Stroud has also been discussed in Chapter Four.

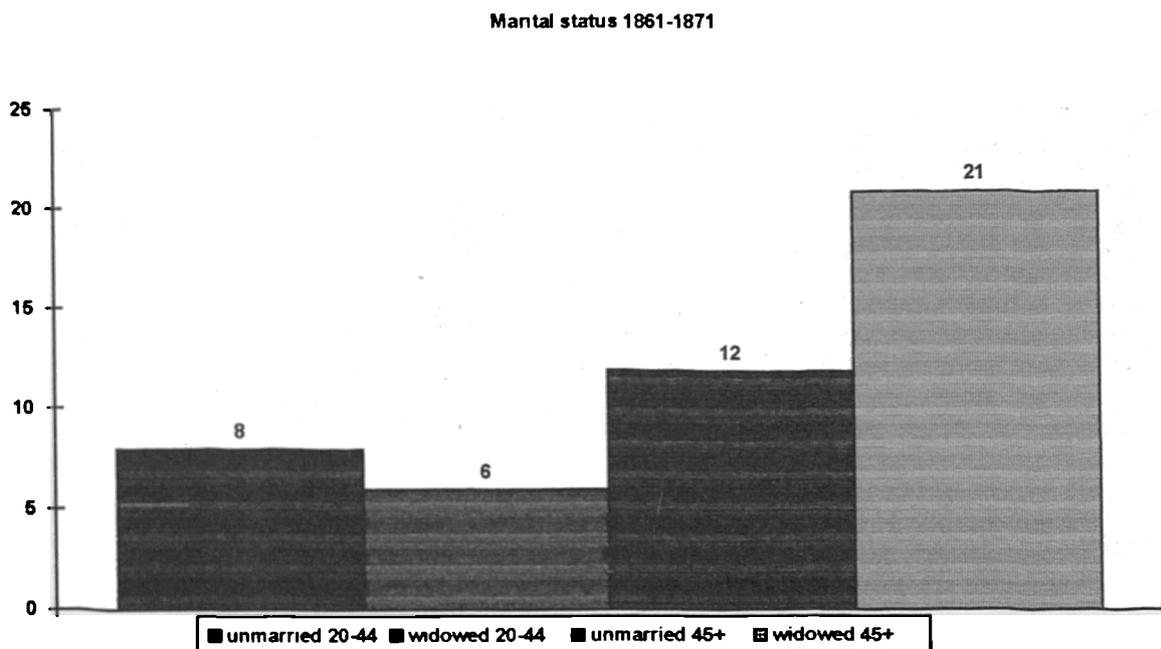
Eighteen members of the Kensington Society lived in households where a woman was the head. Of these, nine were school Principals, (or involved in the day to day running of Bedford College). Among the others, Jane Crow lived with her school friend Elizabeth Garrett until she married. Before that she had lived at the Langham Place premises with Matilda Hays, editor of the English Woman's Journal, and Emily Faithfull, founder of the Victoria Press. In that household there were also three servants, who presumably cleaned the public rooms and provided the meals which were available to visiting women, as well as looking after the needs of these three residents. Sophia Dobson

⁶⁵ibid. p.112.

⁶⁶Anna M. Stoddart. Life and letters of Hannah E.Pipe London and Edinburgh, William Blackwood, 1908.

Collet and Emily Bovell both lived with a widowed mother. Anna Swanwick lived with her sister (who also signed the suffrage petition). In 1861 their house in Cumberland Terrace, near Regent's Park was also home and workplace to five servants. The Keary sisters, Anna and Eliza, shared their home with four young cousins from India, and three servants. Frances Power Cobbe lived with a woman friend, who also supported suffrage, and was on the earliest committees organised by Clementia Taylor. Ellen Heaton lived with a cook and housemaid in Leeds. Her income came from paper house and railway shares. Barbara Bodichon, before her marriage, and for much of the time after it, owned and controlled the houses she lived in in England. Jessie Boucherett's sister inherited her father's title of Lord of the Manor. Some of the fifty households in this sample shared the comfortable, even opulent, lifestyle of those Kensington Society members who were heads of their own households. However many did not, and these are the main focus here.

Chart 5b Marital status of Heads of Household sample



Only fourteen of these women responsible for family and home were under forty-five in 1866, Thirty three were over forty-five, and the age of three is not known. Of those under forty-five, eight were single, six widowed and one married. The older women included twelve who were single, one married, and twenty-one widows. The older widows constitute two fifths of the sample, and widows themselves were in the majority. The oldest and youngest women in the sample are all widows. The oldest, born in 1787, was Mrs Maria Burrows. She lived in Ipswich, and was a retired plumber's widow. In

1871 she shared her home with a companion, a cook and a housemaid. The two youngest widows were Emma Tingle and Sophia Caroline Elton, both born in 1832. Emma Tingle lived in Woodhouse Street, Leeds. In 1871 she worked as a charwoman, as did her seventeen year old daughter. With the help of her son, employed as a leather dresser, they supported her two younger daughters. Sophia Elton lived at 'Fernlea", Fallowfield, Manchester where she ran a small school. In 1866 her two daughters were only two and three years old. In 1871 she employed two governesses, a housemaid and a cook, and had three resident scholars. The governesses might be those semi-pupil-semi-teachers that Matilda Chaplin described, paying reduced fees to be there, rather than being paid for their work. The single parent of young children was in a particularly perilous situation, since widowhood could mean the end of a tenancy. Those women who had a secure home could use it as a place of business, and a school or lodging house was often the preferred use.

The two married heads of household were in strongly contrasting personal circumstances. The younger, Mrs Harriot Sheeran, lived in Great George Street Salford. Her absent husband was a Quartermaster Officer, and she had five children, and no living-in servant. The Countess de Avigdor, on the other hand, lived in Upper Harley Street, London. In 1861 her household consisted of four children aged from seven to twenty years old, a governess and six other servants. Of all the women traced in this whole study, her circumstances appear to have been the most opulent.

In this sample the proportion of married to single women is different both to the population as a whole, and to the total group who signed the suffrage petition. It could be that this balance, of many widows over forty-five, and rather more single women over that age, reflects the proportions among those 'lost' women who have not been traced. The vulnerability of the widow and the older single woman make this seem likely, since they would not appear on records so frequently if they were lodgers, dependants, or moved house. The caricatures of those seeking what Punch characterised as 'spinster suffrage', both in words and pictures appear to be older women, stereotypes, to be sure, but possibly reflecting the experience of such women. The well-to-do widow or single woman had other reasons for feeling disadvantaged. Such a woman was Ellen Heaton who was a Kensington Society member. When she was twenty-seven, in 1843:

Her father made a settlement for her benefit, to which she was a party, and which was signed by her....After the death of her father in 1852, she lived alone [sic] ...her mother having died in 1841. Dr Heaton was his sister's trustee, and on her behalf he administered her property, which consisted of houses in Lyddon Terrace, Springfield Mount, Liffon Place, Hyde Terrace, and Albert Villas in Clarendon

Road. In 1859 he purchased three houses in Woodhouse Square... as an investment for her, and she lived in number six until her death.⁶⁷

The following satirical article may actually reflect the feelings of such a woman. It appeared in *Punch* three days before Barbara Bodichon and Helen Taylor started to discuss the practicalities of the suffrage petition:

A Reform Letter from a single lady.

Respected Mr Punch,

Materfamilias cares but little for the taxes because she does not pay them personally...But, sir, I who am a spinster and pay my own taxes, I know how much of my income they devour. I have a house and pay innumerable rates and assessed taxes, and I have some money in the funds, which ought to bring me in 300 a year, but which doesn't because a little bit is snapped off each hundred pounds for the income tax, and I have shares in a railroad, and whenever my dividends are paid so much is always deducted for the same odious tax. Therefore I am personally interested in taxes and the Franchise Bill...I am sufficiently intelligent to manage my own affairs, and to appreciate Punch, and I never get tipsy, yet I have no vote, while Jenkins the greengrocer, who comes to wait while I give dinner parties, and who has twice been bankrupt, and makes mistakes in his bills [has].⁶⁸

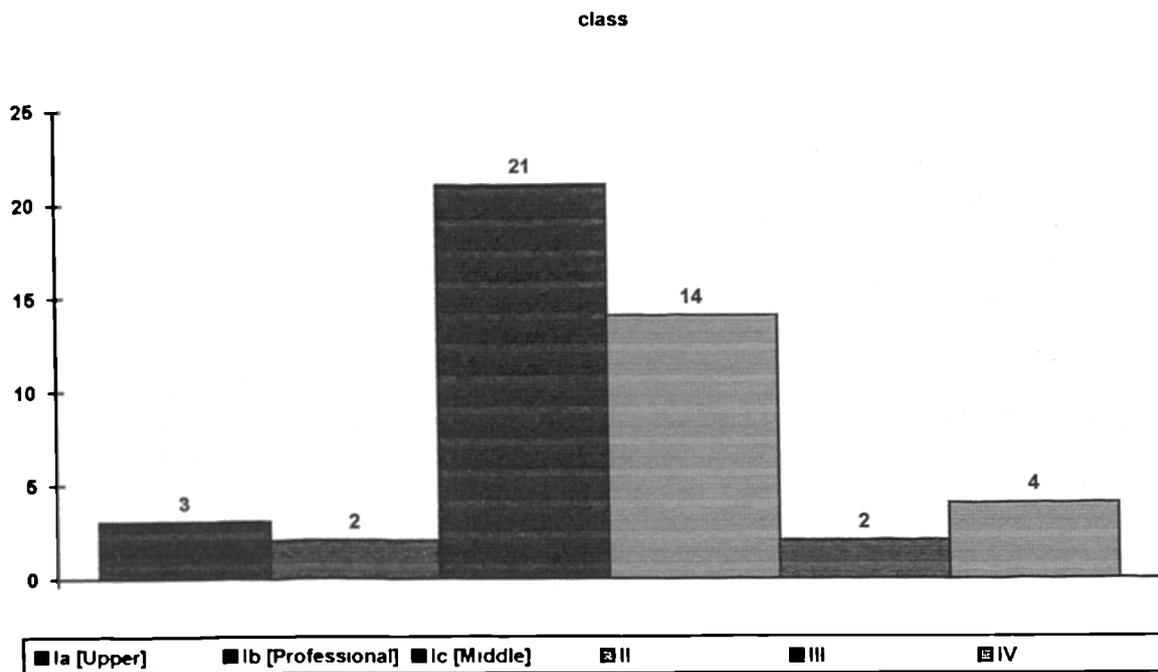
The family background or class of the sample was difficult to establish. Five women in the sample had male family members living at home who were working. These sons were, respectively a druggist's assistant, a designer's apprentice, a Manchester warehouseman and an errand boy. Mrs Jane Lewin, sister-in-law of Harriet Grote, had a son who was clerk in an office. Since their mothers were designated Head of Household, and the sons were all at an early stage of their career, their occupations can have little bearing on the social class of their mothers. In only four cases was there information about husband's occupation. The Quartermaster Officer's wife has already been mentioned, as has Mrs Burrows, whose substantial household implies that her plumber husband must have been successful during his lifetime. Maria Grey and her sister Emily Shirreff were the daughters of an Admiral. Another widow whose husband's occupation was known was Mrs Mary Ann Lalor, who was born in 1800. She was the widow of John Lalor, who died in 1856, and had been an Irish Poor Law Commissioner and educational writer. In spite of his occupational status and her quite advanced age, his widow was running a day school in 1861, with her sister and daughter, and the support of five domestic servants. The shift in class from wife of a respectable civil servant, to small scale entrepreneur working from

⁶⁷Brian and Dorothy Payne. 'Extracts from Dr Heaton's Diaries.' op. cit. p. 141.

⁶⁸*Punch* May 5th 1866 p192

home gives some indication of the changes which middle class women would expect, were they not left with some income from shares, annuities or funds. Even those women who had income from such sources, as the letter in Punch indicated, felt financial stress. As will be seen, those 'independent' women in this sample lived in smaller households, and sometimes had to take in lodgers, even though they did not actually work. Chart 5c uses a combination of information about family background from other sources and occupational class which provided information for forty-six women.

Chart 5c Occupational class /Family background of Heads of Household sample



The occupations of the sample women themselves place them in a similar range of class to the larger petition sample. Sixteen were not working, of whom three had no occupation, one was presumably supported by her son, two were retired, and one was a landowner. Ten were annuitants, fund holders or shareholders. They are placed in class Ic, as are the seven women running schools, four of which had boarders. Only two households of women who wrote for a living are also in that occupational class. The rest are from the intermediate class II, which straddles the lower middle class and the upper working class, and the rest are working class. Two were lodging house keepers and one ran a boarding house. (The difference being that the boarder shared the family meals, while the lodger did not.) The boarding house keeper, Anna Jack, had three boarders who also signed the suffrage petition. In 1866 she was thirty-eight years old, and in 1871 she was a member of the General Committee for the Medical Education of Women. One of

her boarders was Mrs Sarah Kenrick, born in 1800, who in 1873 was on the executive committee of the Ladies Association for the Education of Women for the Medical Profession. This was clearly a 'respectable' boarding house, since Education Commissioner Joshua Fitch, whose wife was a member of the Kensington Society, stayed there when visiting London. Mrs Henrietta Carter's lodging house in Camp Road Leeds was more typical. In 1871 she had one servant, and two lodgers, one a master turner employing two men, and the other a cloth merchant employing two men. The small number of lodging and boarding houses underestimates the role of the paying guest as a source of income for these women heads of household. An additional thirteen households had a lodger, boarder, group of young relatives, or pupils living in, which made it the most common method of earning money for this sample, even when it was not the sole source of income

Two women ran shops. Mrs Eliza Embleton of Burley Street, Leeds, ran a stationers and book shop and had four children at home in 1871, all working. One daughter was a dressmaker, the second a domestic servant. One son was a mechanical draftsman, and the other was a bookbinder, presumably contributing to her business. One woman was a provision dealer, whose two daughters signed the petition. Mrs Ann Northwood was a dairy keeper in Fore Street in the City of London. Another City businesswoman was Mrs Esther Vials, who in 1861 was assisting her husband in his coffee house, but by 1871 was widowed and the coffee house keeper herself, assisted by her daughters Esther and Lucy, and a general servant. They had a lodger to supplement their income

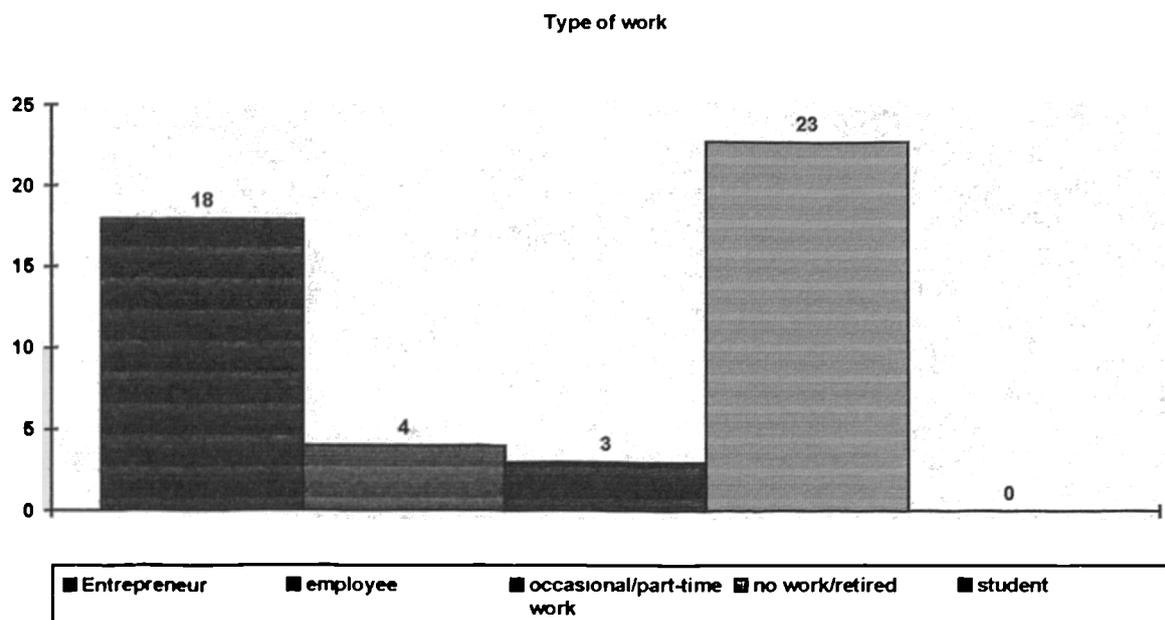
Three households were in business on a larger scale. The most substantial business was run by Mrs Eleanor French, who, at the age of thirty-eight in 1866, had already been a widow for at least five years. In trades directories she was described as a hop dealer and farmer, and the 1861 Census describes her as a farmer of forty-two acres employing eight men and four boys. Her four children were born between 1845 and 1857, and she had an unmarried sister and a manservant living in. Later directories reveal a man with her surname as her successor at the farm, possibly a son. Whether he took over on her death or his majority is not clear. The two other businesses were both milliners. Mrs Susanna Hacking, of New Bailey Street Salford, had two daughters working with her. They employed four 'persons'. Her son was a designer's apprentice. Mrs Hacking and her daughters Esther and Annie all signed the suffrage petition. The second millinery business was also involved in lace making, and was in Castle Gate, in the lace making area of Nottingham. Here the four Ward sisters employed ten young women and one servant. Only three of the sisters; Mary, Annie and Martha, who were aged between thirty-three

and forty-two in 1866, signed the petition. Another business, (which might have been a shop), was that of the Wilson family of Cavendish Street Manchester. Here a mother aged seventy-six, and her three unmarried daughters were dealers in baby-linen, fancy work and smallware. The eldest daughter, Alice, aged forty-one, was designated head of household, so possibly the mother was infirm and not involved in the business. This family of women had no servants, so the business might be small or not thriving.

The rest of the working women were employees. Only one, Miss Mary Shepherd, worked in industry. Born in 1818, she lived in Barker Gate, Nottingham, and was a pattern setter. Hers was the smallest household in the sample. She lived with a female boarder who was a jennier. Presumably both worked in the Nottingham lace industry. The rest of the sample were employed in domestic occupations. The most independent among these were Mary and Maria Cumming, who were live-in housekeepers in solicitor's offices in Austin Friars in the City of London. Mary was aged sixty four in 1866, and her daughter was twenty eight when they signed the petition. Emma Tingle of Leeds, who worked as a charwoman, has already been mentioned. Frances Lumley also lived in Leeds. She had four children and worked as a laundress.

The problems of establishing the class of these women with any certainty prompted another investigation, into the place of work and earning money in their lives. There were five categories were selected. Some women were entrepreneurs, working full time at their job, employing others, and with responsibility for the place of work. In the second category were women who worked for others full time. The third group either worked part time, or occasionally (for example at journalism or painting). The fourth category was of women who did not work, or had retired, and the fifth was women who were students

Chart 5d Place of work in the lives of forty-eight women in the Heads of Household sample.



The predominance in the wider group of those who ran their own businesses, or who were in full time employment has already been discussed. Older women who had a private income and who shared the views of the 'correspondent' of *Punch* (quoted earlier in this chapter) that this resource was diminished by factors over which they were powerless, appear to have been successfully canvassed. This group fits Bodichon's description exactly, being 'respectable, orderly and independent'. The remaining heads of household in the sample were predominantly entrepreneurs, and far fewer were employees or in part-time work. Those who were full-time employees were working class women in domestic and industrial occupations. Only the pattern setter and the charwoman worked away from home. The laundress could have worked from her own home, in which case she would swell the ranks of the entrepreneurs. The few who worked occasionally, or part time either had to work to supplement their income, or maybe chose to work, as did the Keary sisters, because they enjoyed writing for children. This chart does not take into account the income generated by paying guests, sometimes pupils, sometimes lodgers etc. which has been mentioned before, and which applies both to working households and some with private income.

The most striking fact to emerge from this enquiry into the lives of fifty women who were heads of household in the 1860's was that not one of them lived completely

alone. They might share their home with family, servant, lodger or friend, but, however straitened their circumstances, they all had at least one person with whom to share their home. For most of this sample, these were family members. Three households had between three and four family members who were out at work. Ten households had dependent family members; children or elderly relatives with no occupation, an average of just under four each. Six households had a mix of working and dependent family, an average of just under three each. Twelve families worked co-operatively in the business or enterprise as partners. Each of these families had an average of two other family members involved with the head of household in the business. An example of a small non-working household is that of Mrs Louisa Hayes, who lived in Portland Terrace, Regent's Park. In spite of the rather grand address, this was a modest household. In 1861 she lived with her two children aged eight and nine, and a thirty-year-old sister who was a music teacher. The two women kept one servant. In contrast is the household of Mrs Eliza Temple whose home, Milford House, Homerton, was a Ladies Boarding School. She had four adult family members living with her; her mother, daughter, sister and niece. She also employed an assistant governess, housekeeper and cook. They all catered to the needs of twelve boarders aged between nine and twenty. Of those living with family members, six had private incomes, twenty one had working households, and the situation of five households is not known.

Eighteen heads of household had no family member living with them. Of those, most had private income. Typical is Miss Lucy Goss, of Fonnerau Road, Ipswich, an annuitant who in 1871 had a lodger (a provision merchant) and one general servant. Only in five of these households were the heads of household working. These worked as a teacher, a dairy keeper, a pattern setter, a boarding housekeeper and a lodging house keeper. Miss Marianne Barton, of Lime Grove, Manchester, was professional enough to have joined the Manchester Board of Schoolmistresses in 1867. Her day school had three live-in general teachers and two servants.

Thirty of the households had employees living in them. Nine had one employee, four had two employees, six had three employees, two had four employees, six had five employees, one had twelve and one had thirteen. When the households were split into those which had unearned income and those which were self-supporting the picture was clearer. Sixteen families with private means had an average of three servants each. Only two annuitants had no servants at all. Two women with sons in work had one servant each. Fifteen out of the twenty-six working households have servants. In this case the average number is four each. This average is swollen by the four Misses Ward, with their millinery and lace business employing ten women, as well as one house servant, and Mrs

French's twelve farm workers and one house servant. When these large employers are taken out of account, the average number of employees drops to just under three. Eleven working households have no servant or other paid employee living in.

The place which paying guests had in these households has already been noted. Lodgers provided extra income, whilst feeding themselves. Boarders ate with the family. Pupils needed practical care of laundry and behaviour, as well as tuition, though as has been shown, some could also help with these chores for a reduced fee. Elderly relatives might contribute from an annuity. Two families, the Keary sisters and Miss Emily Maltby, cared for the children of ex-expatriate relatives. These seven children, all coincidentally born in Madras, were victims of the belief that British children born in India had a better chance of survival in Britain after their infancy. Some such children were sent to boarding establishments or relatives from as early as the age of two. Clearly some of these paying guests would generate more income than others, and some might actually represent an added expense to the householder. Six out of the sixteen households with private means had paying residents. Three had one or two lodgers, two had relatives' children, and one had an annuitant staying. Eleven of the twenty-six working households appear to have received income from residents. Four were schools with three, six, twelve, and twenty-six pupils respectively. Seven had from one to three lodgers, three as the sole income, and four in addition to another source of income.

Another difference between the households supported by unearned income, and those which earned, was their size. Those households with unearned income were smaller. They had on average three people in each, whilst in working households the average was more than seven. When the types of working household were separated, a slightly different picture emerged. Those running shops, or taking in lodgers had an average of just over four people each. Those in farming and manufacturing business had an average of eleven. Schools had an average of twelve people. However, when this was refined to show the numbers in the establishment providing the service, and those pupils using the service, just over six people on average were providers of education and care, and an average of eight were resident users for each school. Two schools were day establishments, and the actual number of pupils was not known.

The lives of Mrs Pipe, and her daughter Hannah Pipe, (discussed in Chapter Two part 1.) reveal a success story of women as heads of household. They started with the advantages of a house which they owned, a bright daughter near the end of a quality education, a business which Mrs Pipe was able to run for three years while her daughter completed her education. Mrs Pipe had the energy to walk three miles each way to work each day, and when their school was started, the skills to administer the daily domestic

organisation of the school. Her daughter attended night school while teaching, and attracted the daughters of wealthy manufacturers to her school. When advised to move to London, where she could charge higher fees, many of those pupils followed her to become boarders. She had the connections in the educational establishment, through her mentor W.B.Hodgson, to obtain male academics to teach part time. She was sufficiently knowledgeable to recruit well trained teachers from Bedford and Queen's College, London, and to attract interested pupil teachers. Her mother meanwhile, administered and organised the growing school. This is a very different picture of a widow and her spinster daughter than that commonly portrayed at the period. Even an overtly sympathetic novel like George Gissing's *The Odd Women*⁶⁹ describes the family of orphaned women as not in control of their lives, hapless feeble creatures adrift and vulnerable. His feminists, Rhoda Nunn and Mary Barfoot are clear-sighted, strong characters, organising for the benefit of seemingly helpless friends. In the context of this sample, women with some private income were more isolated, and perhaps vulnerable. Those households where women were self-supporting appear to have been large, robust and mutually sustaining. Relatives or friends might combine to take on employees and lodgers. They might start a commercially viable school, or carry on a business inherited from husband or father. They maintained the responsibility for family members, and used their home in a range of ways as a workplace. Where women were boarders, as at Miss Jack's boarding house in Dorset Square, they were leading active, interesting lives, which included involvement in campaigning for the medical education of women. Hannah Pipe, in spite of the scale of her profit making school, made time to join the London Association of Schoolmistresses, and her biographer recorded that she would regularly meet fellow headmistresses:

Miss Pipe, Miss Janion and Miss Metcalf and her sister [Fannie and Annie Metcalf ran a successful school in Hendon] used to dine at each other's houses periodically for the purposes of discussing school matters. We teachers rather dreaded these occasions because after them...[she] would want to change her plans and try theirs ..⁷⁰

These were women who were practically disadvantaged in their daily lives by the lack of political power. As well as the unfairness of being taxed and rated without any say in how that money was to be spent, their access to credit must have been limited. When trading they had to function in a largely male environment. As providers of services such as education, they had to satisfy the fathers who held the purse strings. An innovative

⁶⁹George Gissing, *The Odd Women* London, Virago Press 1980 [1893]

⁷⁰Anna Stoddart *Life and letters of Hannah E. Pipe* p.185

Principal like Hannah Pipe had to persuade her customers that she was providing an excellent education, and that sometimes it was important that her pupils were taught by men. Her biographer comments that:

It showed a considerable amount of courage as well as a liberal mind to invite such a splendid embodiment of the revolutionary spirit [the geography lecturer Dr Gottfried Kinkel]... Six feet of vigorous manhood with dark eyes and prematurely whitened hair to lecture with a poet's tongue to a roomful of girls fresh from middle class puritan homes...⁷¹

In a letter to a prospective parent in 1856 Hannah Pipe wrote:

My energies and efforts are mainly concentrated on the training of those powers of mind and heart that fit a woman for the thoughtful and intelligent performance of her duties in life; the cultivation of judgement and imagination, the implanting of sound tastes, and the formation of sound habits...the girls have studied diligently, and conducted themselves well without the constraint of artificial stimulus- no prizes, good or bad marks, no medals, no stated rewards or punishments of any kind whatever ..⁷²

The skills which she outlines here were those which she, and her mother before her had used to achieve success when they were left with the responsibility for their own survival. Such skills must have been used by many of the other women who had responsibility for their own households. The fifty households in this sample did not contain many women who went on to join the later campaigns for suffrage and women's rights, it is true, but these fifty households contained as many as sixty-eight women prepared to sign a public petition for women's suffrage.

⁷¹ibid p 91

⁷² ibid. p 60.

Chapter Six. Shared commitment

The history of women's rights campaigns in the latter half of the nineteenth century is based on the records of organisations, so the role of the middle class 'organiser' is unavoidably placed centre stage. Without this particular petition, providing information on all the women who signed, the picture of the suffrage issue in 1866 from the available evidence would consist of the names of some of the organisers and main canvassers, lists of the few 'good' names which would catch the attention of the public when they appeared in the press, and the part played in the House of Commons by male supporters and detractors. In the following two or three years, correspondence between two or three key leaders, most of which survived filtered by selection by Helen Taylor and Emily Davies, and lists of subscribers to the Suffrage Societies in Manchester, London, Bristol and Edinburgh, again focus the attention upon the leadership. With the advent of the suffrage journals, the attention of the rank and file readership was attracted by information about issues and leaders, the places from which petitions came, and the quantity of support in each locality. Mass support was being sought, and the individual, unknown, campaigners were being informed and encouraged in order to bulk out that support.

It could be argued that the role of the rank and file, particularly those from the working class, is not of any real interest, because they were not involved in organisation, and because there is no other evidence on their further or previous commitment on other feminist issues. This thesis argues that, because of the unique nature of the petition as evidence, we can actually show what interest, support and commitment existed, among a very wide range of women. It also highlights the fact that a great many more women than can be traced, women who were even less secure, also demonstrated interest, support and commitment. This is an up-ending of the older approach of the historian of feminism or suffrage, who has often sought to demonstrate the leadership, philosophy, and 'heroism' of early feminists. In this study, the leaders, particularly the members of the Kensington Society, are important, but their importance rests as much on their ability to draw support upwards from the range of more 'ordinary' women, as on their organising role. Their organising methods are significant, for the access which those methods gave them to the ordinary women. The particular method of the printed transcription of a petition involved a great deal of time, and expense. It also placed a real value on every single woman who had signed. For once there was no header list of the great and good. For Emily Davies and the rest of the committee, this must have been a positive choice, since this arrangement meant so much work for them. In the space of a very few days they had to

sort names into alphabetical order and proof read the list when it returned from the printer. The significant decision to place the charwoman's name next to the countesses' must have been deliberate. This high value placed on the ordinary supporter appears to have disappeared within months. Even the Enfranchisement of Women Committee (1866-7) balance sheet¹ does not list contributions under ten shillings. The odd shillings and pence which were unattributed came to three pounds and nine shillings. Thus the contribution of at least seven people, (and ten percent of subscribers), was already being marginalised, only a year after the petition.

This chapter is in four sections and is about shared campaigning commitment. The first section discusses those causes which engaged the support of over 350 women and their families both before and after 1866. The second section is an account of the activities chosen by women whose commitments began with the suffrage petition in 1866. The third section considers the commitment of around fifty very active women who supported more than three causes. Their multiple commitments provided an opportunity to evaluate the level of commitment, to discover which women were most active, and whether there was a pattern of active involvement. The fourth section examines the commitments of Kensington Society members and compares those who signed the suffrage petition with those who did not. Throughout this chapter it should be borne in mind that some 1,150 women who supported suffrage by signing this petition, have not been found on record as continuing to support either suffrage or any other cause.

1. Shared commitment before and after 1866

Defining shared commitment to campaigns presents both quantitative and qualitative problems. This applies both to the actions of people and to the scale of a campaign or move in a campaign. For example, one woman might sign a petition, another subscribe a shilling, another subscribe twenty-five pounds, another canvass or write envelopes, another spend hours at committee meetings, yet another devote almost all her waking hours to a cause. The campaign might have a limited short term objective, which was achieved quickly, like access for girls to the University Local Examinations, or it might be one of much wider significance and longer time scale. An example of this is the organically changing campaign against the slave trade and slavery itself which changed geographical focus, tactical direction, and which worked through compatible or competing organisations over a century, in response to changing circumstances. In this section, no attempt will be made to evaluate the scale or quality of these women's involvement. The

¹The Clark Archive, Street, Somerset. Priestman Papers, Misc. Pol., Enfranchisement of Women Committee Balance Sheet of Receipts and Expenditure, October 1866-July 1867.

purpose here was to discover whether previous experience of campaigning in a common cause drew women to support suffrage, or whether signing this suffrage petition then led on to further shared commitment. It was to discover whether this occasion was a point on a continuum of shared activity, or marked the end or beginning of commitment.

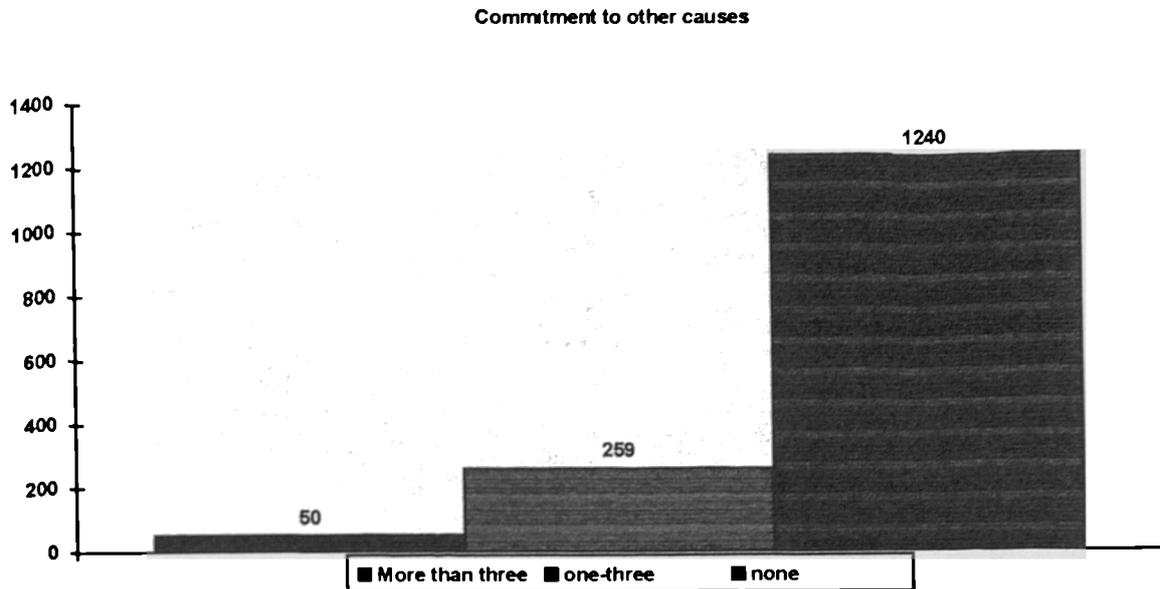
The information for this and the next section was obtained from those membership, subscription and memorial lists which have survived, with some scant information from biographical sources and campaigning periodicals. It cannot aspire to be comprehensive; and detailed information on, for example, the length of membership, was simply not available² A woman appearing here means that she did become involved, but her non-appearance does not rule out her involvement at some time. Interest, small contributions, even rank and file membership (as with the Reform League), often went unrecorded, and it was often an accident of fate that led to the survival of some lists. (For example the recent discovery of a 1867 pasted education memorial at Girton College in a box of account books from the finance department.) Some societies were short lived, others combined, most seem to change name. The Society of Female Artists metamorphosed (in title at least) into a society for ladies and then for women. The semantics of these alterations were fascinating, but they made the historian's task more difficult. The early suffrage societies were particularly difficult to disentangle, as were the (apparently) many societies and committees promoting the medical education of women. Sometimes here they were treated as generic groups where it was difficult to distinguish one from the other.

There was evidence that just over 300 women, or around one fifth of those investigated had one or more commitments of the types outlined above. Eighty-five of those had commitments which began before 1866 and continued long after that date. Eighty women do not appear to have given their support publicly after 1866. For 144 women, the suffrage petition was their first recorded commitment. The overwhelming majority of those whose recorded commitment stops in 1866 were teachers who were involved in the University Local Examinations campaign, or who asked for the education of girls to be included in the remit of the Taunton Commission. The 144 women for whom the suffrage petition was their first commitment went on to involvement in a wide range of activities, notably suffrage, anti-Contagious Diseases Acts and non-professional

² I must acknowledge the contribution of the many historians who have directed me to such lists and sources. Lee Holcombe, Wives and property: reform of the Married Women's Property law in nineteenth century England. Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1983, and Clare Midgley, Women against slavery, the British campaigns, 1780-1870. London, Routledge, 1992, were two books which were informative in this respect. Many of the lists were in the Fawcett Library, Girton College Archive, the British Library, Birmingham City Library, Friends House Library, Queen's College London Archive, Royal Holloway and Bedford College Registry, etc.

educational organisations. Nearly 1,200 women did not either come from, or go on to, support for other campaigns, even women's suffrage.

Chart 6a Evidence of other campaigning commitments among the 1499 women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition.



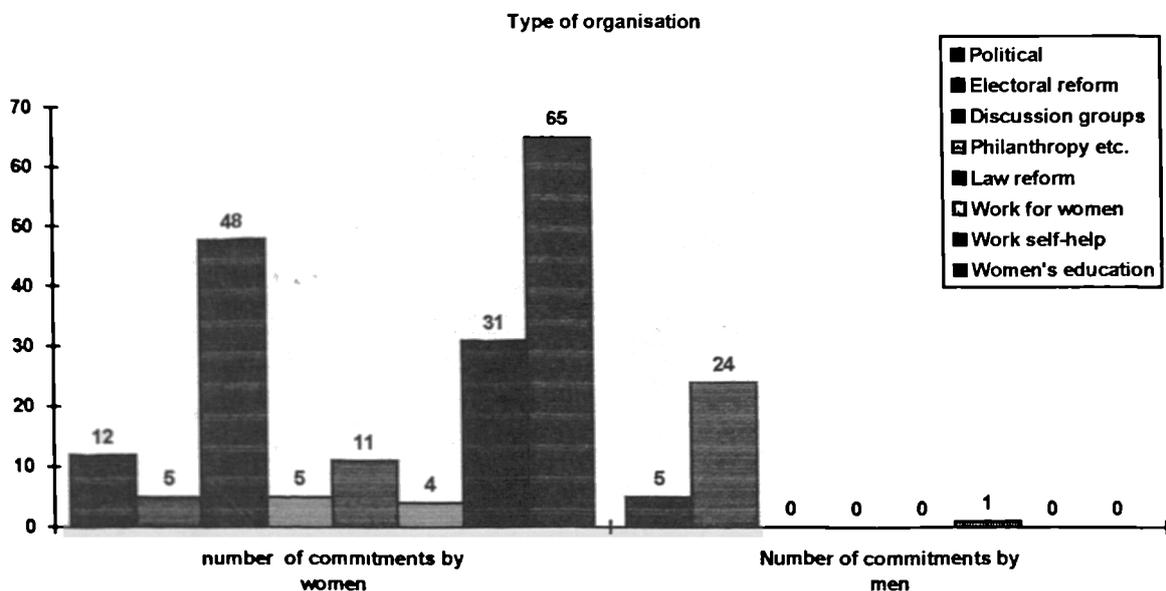
The range of shared commitment involved around sixty-seven movements, organisations, committees and executive committees, petitions and memorials. The scale of commitment ranged from being the member of the family of a subscriber or sympathiser, to being on an executive committee or even being a prime mover, creating a new organisation, as Harriet Grote did with the Society of Female Artists, or as Emily Davies did on a number of occasions. The number of commitments of any individual could range from one to ten or even more. The next section of this chapter deals with attempts to quantify multiple commitments. There were 557 recorded commitments in all. Before 1866, 181 women were themselves involved, and thirty more had male family members involved in twenty-two organisations (etc.). It cannot be emphasised too strongly, that this may be a serious underestimation of the actual level of activity. However, the information on the organisations etc. which were supported, gives some indication of the other priorities of women who supported women's suffrage in 1866, and the organisations which they felt would further their interests after that date.

The organisations which were supported before 1866 can be roughly classified as

1. Broadly political, (for example Anti-Slavery, Anti Corn Law League.)
2. Concerned with electoral reform, (e.g. Chartism, Reform League.)
3. Concerned with women's legal issues; (e.g. Married Women's Property.)

- 4 Promoting women's work (e.g. Society for Promoting the Employment of Women);
 5. Self help for women who worked. (e.g. Society of Female Artists, London Association of Schoolmistresses.)
 - 6 Women's education;
 - 7 General philanthropy;
 - 8 General media for the discussion of all such issues, (e.g. NAPSS, Kensington Society, and the English Woman's Journal.)
- Chart 6b uses this broad classification to show the spread of interest and support already existing among the women who signed the suffrage petition. The commitments of men are there to demonstrate the tone of the home in which the woman lived.

Chart 6b 211 Shared commitments to organisations before 1866 among women who signed the suffrage petition and their immediate families.³



The first point to note is that only two out of every fifteen women who signed had evidence of any former commitment, even when their family is taken into account. The issue of women's suffrage, which was already being discussed before the general election of 1865, clearly interested more of these particular women than other women's issues, and encouraged some of them to take further steps in other directions after 1866. It is debatable whether these 'new recruits' were enthused by the discussions of 'spinster suffrage' in the months since summer 1865, or whether it was the enthusiasm of their

³The commitments of men are only included when no commitment was found for a woman herself personally. The male family member's commitment, particularly on women's issues, might have been shared by women in his family.

canvassers, fired by the success of the University Local examinations campaign, which led to their commitment on this issue. Among the minority of women who did support causes, improvements in the education of women were a clear priority. Four people were members of the Female Medical Society executive committee in 1864. One, Ellen Drew Brayshen⁴, was on Miss Blackwell's Committee, and sixty women supported the University Local Examinations campaign. These were mainly teachers, but some were not. In all, forty-four names of women and fifty-eight of men were included in the list of the 'great and good' who backed up the teachers' demands. As has been explained, some supporters also submitted their pupils for trial examinations, and others offered hospitality to students, as well as signing memorials. The next most common commitment was to an organ or medium of discussion of the issues of the day. More than ten women who signed were involved with the English Woman's Journal, nine had been to Annual Meetings of the NAPSS, and thirty-five were members of the Kensington Society. The third most popular cause was that of self help for women who earned their own living. In the late 1850's as has been shown in Chapter Two, organisations were founded to increase the range of paid employment available to middle class women. At the same time, working women themselves had begun to join associations which in a sense were the earliest professional organisations for women. The Society of Female Artists offered its members a commercial outlet for their art, and the London Association of Schoolmistresses provided a meetings for discussion and self-improvement. Ten such women had exhibited at the Society of Female Artists exhibitions, and twenty-one had just joined the London Association of Schoolmistresses, keen to update their skills and network with fellow school Principals and teachers.

Five women had been sufficiently active in Chartism for their efforts to be recorded. They were Mrs William Garrard, Mary A. Walker, Elizabeth Richardson, Mary Lovett (wife of William Lovett) and Elizabeth Pease Nichol. The significance of activity among male relatives is highlighted by those women whose husbands or fathers were involved in political, and, more especially, electoral reform campaigning. Among the relatives of former Chartists were Ada and Julia Barmby. They were respectively the second wife and daughter of communist and Christian Socialist John Goodwyn Barmby. They went on, with him, to subscribe to the Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage in 1868. Two relatives of Richard Moore, a Chartist carver, and two relatives of John Livsey also signed. Surprisingly, the novelist and journalist Eliza Lynn Linton signed. Her

⁴ Ellen Drew Brayshen was the elderly woman who shared a house with the writer and 'mother' of Egyptology, Amelia Blandford Edwards. Both signed the petition. see Joan Rees. Writings on the Nile London, Rubicon Press, 1995.

husband was an active Chartist, Radical and Republican. Subsequently she opposed women's rights in her journalism. The records of the Reform League, which was founded in 1865, include one list of subscriptions towards the expenses of a demonstration by the League in Lancashire on 24th September 1866.⁵ This names eighteen male relatives of these women. Moving on to more general organisations, it is clear that the true level of support for Anti-Slavery has not yet been uncovered, (though Clare Midgley has made a significant contribution to information in this area).⁶ Here only fourteen women have been linked with certainty to this issue, but more research is needed. Those women who were active in Anti-Slavery like Elizabeth Pease Nichol and Elizabeth Reid, were also very influential in the movement to improve the situation of women, as has been shown in Chapter Two. Again the full involvement of women and their male family members in the Anti-Corn Law League needs to be explored, and the figure of two supporters seems improbably small. The Married Women's Property campaign in its first incarnation in 1856 included eleven women among the heading signatures who later supported suffrage. What is surprising, is that none of those eleven women appeared on the committee lists when the campaign was re-started in 1868.⁷

2. Shared commitment after 1866.

Shared commitment after 1866 shows some quite dramatic changes. There are forty-five organisations [some were splinter groups or branches], and 399 individual commitments by women who had already signed the suffrage petition. This chart only includes women who join these organisations for the first time after 1866. Some organisations in the earlier period still continued, for example the London Association of Schoolmistresses, recently founded, and the NAPSS which still held its annual Meetings as a forum for discussion of the issues of the day. The only political organisation is the British Women's Liberal Association. Electoral reform includes nine local suffrage societies as well as the National Society for Women's Suffrage Central Committee. The law reform category now includes the new Married Women's Property committee and the Ladies National

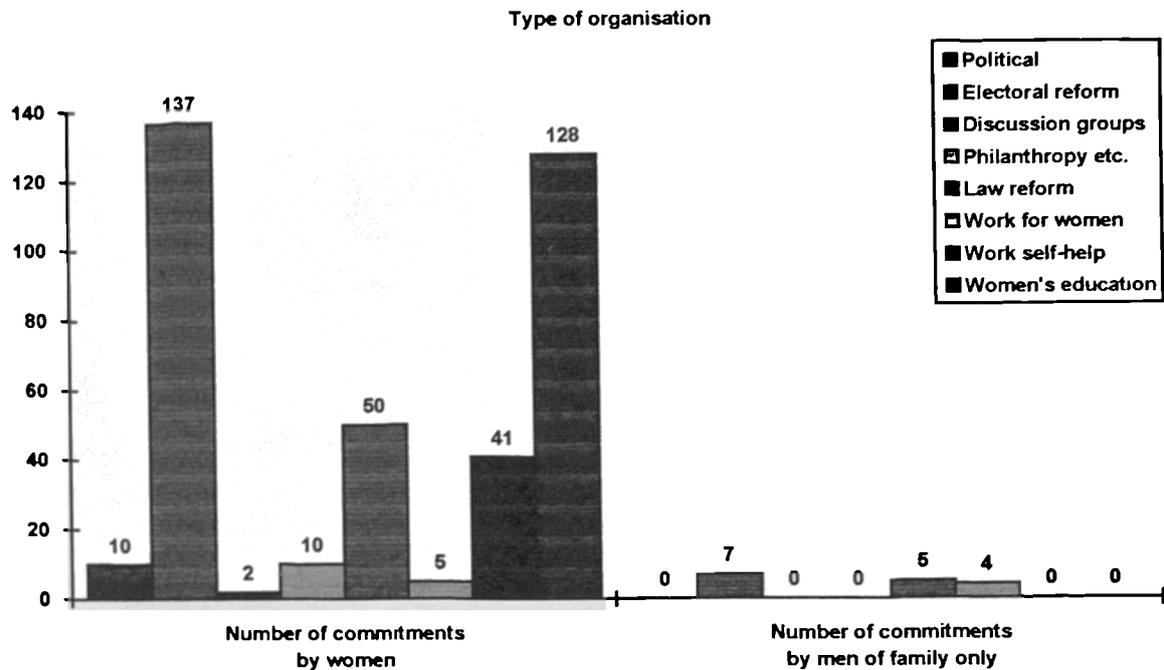
⁵Bishopsgate Institute, Reform League Papers. Lancashire Demonstration Subscription List, 24th September 1866

⁶Clare Midgley, *Women Against Slavery*.

⁷Lee Holcombe *Wives and property: reform of the Married Women's Property law* has useful biographical information on many of the women involved in both attempts. Women who signed in 1856 were Mrs Cowden Clark, Barbara Bodichon, Eliza Lee Bridell Fox, Amelia Blandford Edwards, Matilda Hays, Mary Howitt, Anna Mary Howitt, and 'the Russell Scotts' [a couple who appear to have been very active, but are difficult to trace]

Anti-Contagious Diseases Acts campaign. Women's work is now usually represented by support groups, and work self-help includes women in specific jobs and professions. Education now includes a number of ladies' self-help lecture groups, as well as Girton and the GPDSC.

Chart 6c. Shared commitments to organisations after 1866 among women who signed the suffrage petition and their immediate families.



Educational organisations again attracted much support, and among those whose first commitment came after signing the suffrage petition nearly twice as many now campaigned for improvements in this area. One new type of organisation which proved very successful was the local society which provided lectures for ladies (For example, Mrs Crudelius' Edinburgh Ladies' Education Association.⁸) Women joined the committees of these groups in Manchester, Leeds, Southport and Edinburgh. Many more may have attended the lecture series themselves, in order to gain some secondary education, or for self improvement. The North of England Council and Girton College moved towards providing university education for young women. Two Manchester women, Elizabeth Gloyn, and Elizabeth Wolstenholme (later Elmy) were involved in the North of England Council Six women were involved in Girton College. Its founder, Emily Davies, Barbara Bodichon (her close collaborator), Mrs Manning, the First Mistress, and her stepdaughter Elizabeth Manning had all had other commitments prior to 1866. Those for whom it was

⁸For a full account of this organisation up to 1879, see Katherine Burton. *A Memoir of Mrs Crudelius* Edinburgh, Privately printed, 1879.

earliest commitment it was were Lady Marion Alford, a committee member and Sarah Woodhead, who was to be one of the first students. Another of these first students was the sister of the paid secretary of the petition, Rachel Cook. The two women who were the driving force in setting up the Girls' Public Day School Company, Maria Grey and Emily Shirreff⁹ also signed. The GPDSC went against the apparent trend for teachers to move from public support of women's suffrage. A memorial in the 1880's included the names of many of the Company's headmistresses. Teachers in South Wales, especially Swansea also remained outspoken in favour of women's suffrage.

Forty-five commitments were to organisations which were working towards enabling women to have a medical education. In 1872 there were two committees active, the General Committee for Medical Education and the Complete Medical Education for Women, Edinburgh Committee. With two other associated organisations, they involved a total of thirty three women from the sample. This flurry of activity was focused on the attempts to gain access to Edinburgh University Medical School. Sophia Jex Blake was a member of the Kensington Society, but did not sign the petition. Emily Bovell and Ann E. Clark were her fellow students who did sign. Emily Bovell was also a Kensington Society member. The mother of another of this group of pioneering students, Matilda Chaplin, also supported the petition. In the same year Alice Westlake was secretary of a Women's Hospital committee. In 1878 she was among ten other women who signed who were also governors of the London School of Medicine for Women.

As might have been expected, electoral reform, now specifically women's suffrage, was now the most popular type of commitment among women who signed the suffrage petition. Fifty-two women and one husband were among the eighty-eight people who are listed as contributing to the Enfranchisement of Women Committee between October 1866 and July 1867. Many of these names re-appear on the committee and subscription lists for the suffrage societies in Manchester, London, Edinburgh, and Bristol and the South West in the next five years. Thirty-two appear on the National Society for Women's Suffrage Central Committee list in 1871, with the brother and husband of two other women. Most of the Suffrage society committee lists and subscription lists contain a substantial number of men. However the Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage had an all-woman executive committee in 1870. Ten of the fifteen members had signed the 1866 petition.¹⁰

⁹Emily Shirreff was also an early Mistress of Girton College.

¹⁰Edinburgh Branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage. Subscription list and Treasurer's statement, 17th January 1870.

Changes in laws affecting women were campaigned for by fifty women. They supported two campaigns. One was the campaign for married women to control their own property, the other was the campaign to obtain the repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts. Among the executive Committee of the Married Women's Property Committee between 1868 and 1882 were twelve women and five male family members.¹¹ None of these were 'header' signatories in the 1856 Married Women's Property petition. It is possible that the Committee members post-1866 could have signed the petition, and that the leaders in 1856 could have subscribed to the revived campaign in 1868. There were forty-three people who served on MWP Committees, and, like the Enfranchisement of Women subscribers, a substantial number of these were men. Of the sixteen men, six had wives who were also committee members. Of these married couples three, (Ursula and Jacob Bright, Mr and Mrs W B Hodgson and Clementia and Peter A. Taylor) included wives who had signed in 1866. The LNA included thirty-eight women who signed among their supporters, including, notably Josephine Butler herself.

The societies promoting work for women maintained a small number of new recruits among these women, but there was an increase in the number of women actually involved in doing the jobs themselves. The emphasis of the support groups moved to professional education, particularly of doctors, as has been seen. However over the next forty years, women who signed this petition went on to become practising doctors, and to take up positions in the public service. Six future doctors signed, as did nine women who were to serve as Poor Law Guardians, and thirteen women who were elected, or stood as School Board members. The number of members of the London Association of Schoolmistresses who started or continued their membership was reduced to six, another indication of the withdrawal of teachers from many campaigning activities after 1866. An affiliated organisation, the Manchester Board of Schoolmistresses, set up in 1867 by Elizabeth Wolstenholme, attracted seven of these women as members. Two women became Governors of a Women's Hospital, one campaigned for women Poor Law Guardians and two women and four male family members served on Miss Garrett's Committee to canvass for her election to the London School Board. Her large committee of supporters may have contributed to the fact that she was elected with more votes than any men, (Which she felt should entitle her to take the Chair of the Board, a opinion which her worldly fellow Board member Emily Davies quickly cautioned her against making public!)

¹¹Lec Holcombe. Wives and property. p.238 & 242.

General discussion groups, like the Kensington Society and the NAPSS did not seem to attract new members after 1866, possibly because there was a proliferation of specialised organisations campaigning on the specific issues which had been debated by the NAPSS over the past decade. The Kensington Society folded early in 1868, and many of its most active members were by that time already involved in a range of other time consuming projects. Those members who were earning, like Ellen Nichols, found it difficult to keep up with the practical demands for reading and responding to papers. Annette Akroyd, another country member and ex-Bedford College student, preferred to study for examinations which she returned to college to take. The time for reflection appeared to be past, and the two women with a fresh commitment were Caroline Ashurst Biggs and Mrs Bayle Bernard, respectively Editor and a contributor to a new feminist journal, the English Women's Review, which had a clear suffragist agenda.

The only other organisation which attracted a group of women who signed the suffrage petition was the National Indian Association, an organisation set up by Charlotte Manning and her step-daughter Elizabeth in 1870. They and the eight other women, with mixed and women's committees, set out to foster three aims. One was to inform the British about India, another was to inform Indians about Britain, and the third was to provide welcome and hospitality to Indian students in Britain. As well as having women's committees, the National Indian Association involved women in its main committee Mrs Caroline Donkin took the Chair in 1871, and Mrs Clara Langley was the Vice President of the Madras Branch in 1876, and was offered its Presidentship in 1877.¹² The special circumstances of women in India became influential in the campaign for medical education for women, since the plight of Indian women in purdah caused a number of British women to seek to become doctors to practice among them. The claims of women to practice in Britain were seen as competition in the profession. The maternalistic claim of the colonial women to minister to the unfortunate natives was seen as reasonable and womanly, and this facilitated the entry of more women into the medical profession. The National Indian Association did not campaign specifically for women's rights in India, indeed it was not a campaigning organisation at all, but perhaps its leading women members ensured that information about the disadvantageous situation of some Indian women was conveyed, so that the public were aware and ready to support the education of British women as doctors for them

Where a woman was herself a member or subscriber, the commitments of her male family members are not recorded on this chart. The men included are those whose wives

¹²India Office Library, London. National Indian Association Papers

signed the petition, but who do not appear to have joined other organisations in their own right. It is significant that of these husbands or fathers, seven supported women's suffrage. In the area of law reform, all five men were involved in the Married Women's Property campaign, and not that against the Contagious Diseases Acts. The four men supporting work for women were all at a meeting in support of Miss Garrett's candidacy for the School Board of London in 1870. This might be a reflection of the problems which mixed public meetings presented to women, rather than evidence of active commitment to the cause of women's work by these men.

3. The shared commitment of the most active campaigners amongst those who signed the Suffrage Petition.

Fifty five women with three or more campaigning commitments have been identified. Of these, thirty two were active before 1866 and twenty-three began their commitment after that date, or rather with the suffrage petition. 267 individual commitments are recorded in the chart, an average of just under five for each woman. The charts below attempt to group the activities of these women according to the level of commitment which they represent. As has already been suggested, signing a petition is the act of a moment, compared with hours spent in committee rooms, or the exertions involved in persuading people that a novel idea is a practical possibility. Twenty of the thirty-three women active before 1866 were at some time involved in activities of the latter kind, involving total personal commitment, and often unwelcome publicity and criticism. Sixteen out of the twenty two women whose activities appear to have begun in 1866 are in this category. For the purposes of this investigation, four categories of involvement have been proposed. Level one is that of sympathy, usually represented by a signature on a petition or Memorial, but also by commitment by a husband. The second level involved subscribing, contributing, or being on a non-executive committee list. Level three denotes serious commitment- on an executive committee, as a speaker at meetings, exhibitor at exhibitions or Governor of a women's hospital. Level four includes a range of major commitment, from the Secretaries, Treasurers and Presidents of organisations, to those who took on public office as poor Law Guardians or School Board members, and from the founders of organisations to those who fought for their own right to become doctors.

Nothing final can be argued from these charts, as the information on these early organisations is so incomplete. Nevertheless they are useful in that they indicate the range of individual choices that even these most active women made. It is difficult to find any

consistency of approach, and there is little similarity between women in the pattern of their support. There is not even a clear difference between the ages of the women who were active before 1866 and the women who began their activities after that date. The former are on average slightly older, but in the latter group are women like Margaret Tanner (born in 1817), Maria Grey (born 1816) and Margaret Lucas (born 1818), whilst the earlier group includes Alice Westlake, who was twenty-four in 1866, and Elizabeth Garrett and the Drewry sisters who were just thirty. These charts serve to indicate the range and scale of activity which a relatively small group of women (only fifty-five) could encompass. They also give some idea of the comparative vigour with which these interests were pursued. The final column gives a score for the commitments, giving one point for level one commitment, two for level two, and so on. This 'marking' can undervalue the heaviest commitment, but even in this simple form, it demonstrates some differences between those active before 1866, (who had an average of fourteen points), and after that date, (whose average was eleven points). There is a strong contrast between Kensington Society members and the rest of those with commitments which began both before and after 1866 in number of commitments and level of commitment. When the number of commitments is measured, Kensington Society members have an average of just over six each, while all the other women have an average of just over four. However when level of commitment is taken into account, the difference is more dramatic. The Kensington Society members have an average of eighteen points each, and the non-members only average eleven points each. Once again the Kensington Society is revealed as a group of exceptionally active women, within this group of active women. Even those women whose activities began with the suffrage petition have an average score of just over eleven points each, even though there were more organisations available for them to join, and opportunities for election to public office were an option.

Only three women on table 6d failed to continue their activities after that 1866. Miss Mary Sturch, sister of Mrs Reid, and co-founder with her of Bedford College was elderly at this date. The other two were Mrs Isa Craig Knox and Miss Gertrude King. Isa Craig's active involvement in the campaign after the collection of the petition was cut short by not so much by her marriage in 1866 as by her pregnancy in 1867 when she was thirty-five. The 1871 Census shows her with only one daughter of one year old, so it is possible that personal tragedy, as well as the responsibilities of a household which included her elderly mother-in-law (who signed the suffrage petition), her husband, a brother-in-law, and two servants, may have prevented this previously enthusiastic woman from continued activity. Miss Gertrude King was paid secretary to the SPEW, and perhaps her work precluded other public commitments.

Table 6d The levels of commitment to specific causes of women with multiple commitment active before 1866

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
BABB, Charlotte Artist.	Suffrage petition NAPSS 1871	SFA. 1866 N.S.W.S.c.c.		Tax Refusal 1870-1879	10
BODICHON, Barbara[née Leigh Smith] Artist b.1827	ULE. 1864	SFA.	MWP 1856 KS. 1865-7 NAPSS. PAPER	Suffrage Petition Girton College	23 KS
BOVELL, Emily [Mrs Sturge]	ULE 1864 Suffrage Petition	KS 1865-7 London Assn of Schoolmistresses 1865	WWC Lecturer	DOCTOR	13 KS
BOUCHERETT, Jessie b.1825	ULE 1864	KS. 1865-7 N.S.W.S.c.c.	NAPSS. PAPER General Cttee. for Medical Ed. of Women. 1872	SPEW. founder Edited, wrote and owned <u>English Women's Review</u>	21 KS
CARBUTT, Louisa	ULE 1864	Manchester Board of School Mistresses 1867 Manchester SWS 1868 British Women's Liberal Assn 1884		Poor Law Guardian 1883	11
COBBE, Frances Power b. 1822		KS 1865-7	Suffrage Committee 1866 MWP Committee 1871 NSWS Central Committee 1871, 1874 Committee for the Medical Education of Women 1872		17 KS
CRAIG, Isa [Mrs Knox] Journalist and secretary b.1831			KS. 1865-7	NAPSS paid secretary EWJ Editor Suffrage Petition secretary [at first]	15 KS

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
DAVIES, Emily b. 1830	Edinburgh Ladies Education Assn [advises]		NAPSS PAPER Bedford College, Lady Visitor	ULE 1864 KS Founder and Secretary 1865-7 London Assn of Schoolmistresses Founder 1866 Suffrage Petition delivered 1866 London School Board Memb. 1870 Girton College founder	31 KS
DREWRY, Ellen b.1835 and DRFWRY, Louisa b.1835	ULE 1864 Suffrage petition 1866 Higher Ed Memorial 1867	Working Women's College 1872	EWJ Contributor General Committee for Medical Ed. of Women 1872		11
FITCH, Emma [Mrs Joshua Fitch] b. 1831	Suffrage Petition 1866 [Joshua Fitch NSWS c c]	SPEW KS 1865-7 Working Women's College	Charities Organisation Soc.		12 KS
FOX, Mrs Eliza Lee Bridell Artist b. 1825	Suffrage Petition 1866	MWP 1856	SFA Exhibitor 1866		6
GARRETT, Elizabeth [Mrs E.G.Anderson] Doctor b.1836			KS. Paper	DOCTOR Suffrage Petition hosted and delivered 1866 London School Board 1870 Mayor of Aldeburgh	19 KS
GLOYN, Elizabeth Principal of Ladies School		Manchester SWS 1868	ULE 1864 Candidates North of England Council 1868		8
GOLDSMID, Lady Louisa b. 1819		NSWS c.c. 1871	London School of Medicine for women Governor 1878 MWP Committee 1881-2	ULE 1864 Treasurer	12
GROTE, Harriet [nee Lewin] b. 1792	ULE 1864		NSWS Speaker 1870	SFA Founder 1857	8
KING, Gertrude Secretary b 1834	Suffrage Petition 1866	KS 1865-7		SPEW Secretary [paid]	7 KS

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
LUPTON, Miss Harriet	ANTI-SLAVERY	Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage 1868 Leeds Ladies Education Assn. 1871 LNA. 1871			24 KS
MANNING, Mrs Charlotte [nee Solly, first Mrs Spier] b. 1803			Bedford College Committee ULE 1864 accommodated candidates Suffrage Petition 1866 canvasser	KS President National Indian Assn Founder 1870 Girton College First Mistress 1869	24 KS
NICHOL, Mrs Elizabeth [nee Pease] b. 1807		Edinburgh LEA 1868 NSWS Central Committee 1871 Edinburgh SWS 1870 London SWS 1872	LNA Executive 1871 Medical Education Committee 1872 London School of Medicine for Women, Governor 1878	ANTI-SLAVERY	21
PARKES, Bessie Rayner [Mrs Belloc] b. 1828	Suffrage Petition 1866		NAPSS Speaker SFA Exhibitor 1857	MWP 1856 <u>EWJ</u> 1857-64	15
SLATTERIE, Fanny, Principal of Ladies School	ULE 1864 Memorial 1867		Suffrage Petition 1866 canvasser NSWS Stroud Committee 1870		8
STANSFIELD, Caroline [Mrs James, nee Ashurst]	[Chartist supporter, Mr] [Anti-corn Laws] [Reform League]	ANTI-SLAVERY NSWS c.c. 1871			7
STEINTHAL, Sarah		ANTI-SLAVERY NSWS c.c. 1871 Suffrage Demonstration 1880	Manchester SWS Exec. Committee 1868		9
STURCH, Maria Myrtila	ULE 1864 Suffrage Petition 1866 Memorial 1867	ANTI-SLAVERY MWP 1856	SFA	Bedford College Founder 1849	14
TAYLOR, Clementia [Mrs P.A.] b. 1812	ULE 1864	[EWJ Mr is shareholder] BWL A 1884	MWP committee 1876-82	NSWS 1867-founder	12

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
TAYLOR, Miss Helen b. 1831		Kensington Society 1865		Suffrage Petition 1866 School Board member 1876 Proposed as Parliamentary candidate.	14 KS
WESTLAKE, Mrs Alice nee Hare. b. 1842	Suffrage Petition 1866	Kensington Society 1865 Working Women's College contributor 1874-5	General Cttee. for Med. Education of Women 1872 London School of Medicine for Women Governor 1878	Women's Hospital secretary 1872 London School Board Member 1876	19 KS
WIGHAM, Miss Eliza b. 1820 Quaker Minster		ANTI-SLAVERY Temperance Purity Peace London SWS	Edinburgh SWS Committee 1870 LNA Executive Cttee. 1871 Complete Medical Ed. for Women Cttee 1872 London School of Medicine for Women. governor 1878		22
WIGHAM, Mrs Jane b. 1801		ANTI-SLAVERY Temperance Edinburgh SWS 1870			6
WINKWORTH, Susanna b. 1820	ULE 1864	NSWS c.c. 1871	National Indian Assn. founder member 1870 Cheltenham Ladies College Council	Poor Law Guardian	13
WOLSTENHOLM E, Elizabeth C. [Mrs Elmy] b. 1834		KS 1865-7 London Assn of Schoolmistresses 1865 NSWS LNA sub 1871	ULE 1864 Candidates MWP Committee 1868-71, 1880-2 Manchester SWS Exec. Committee 1868. North of England Council 1868 General Committee for Medical Education 1872	Manchester Bd. of Schoolmistresses. Founder 1868	27 KS

Table 6e. The Levels of Commitment to specific causes of women with multiple commitment. Activities commencing with the 1866 suffrage petition.

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
ASHWORTH, Annie		Edinburgh SWS 1870 Bristol and SWSWS 1871 LNA 1871	MWP Committee 1873-4	School Board 1870	13
ASHWORTH, Lillias		Bristol and SWSWS 1871	LNA 1871 MWP Committee 1873-4	School Board 1870	12
BRIGHT, Ursula [Mrs Jacob Bright]		General Committee for the Medical Education of Women 1872	LNA Exec Committee MWP Exec Committee 1867-82 NSWS Exec Committee 1868 NSWS c.c. Executive 1871		14
BUTLER, Mrs Josephine	Suffrage Petition 1866 Memorial Colleges for Women 1867		MWP Committee 1868-1882	LNA Founder	8
CRAIG, Barbara and Agnes		Edinburgh SWS 1870 LNA 1871 London SWS 1872	Complete Medical Education for Women Cttee. 1872		9
CRUDELIUS, Mrs Mary b.1839		London SWS 1872	Medical Education Edinburgh Cttee. 1872 NAPSS Paper 187	Edinburgh Ladies Education Assn. founder 1868	12
DONKIN, Mary Anne	Suffrage Petition 1866	BWLA 1884		NIA Ladies Committee Chair Poor Law Guardian 1883	11
GREY, Mrs Maria C. nee Shirreff b. 1816	Suffrage Petition 1866	Miss Garrett's London School Board Committee 1870 British Women's Liberal Assn. 1884	General Committee for the Medical Education of Women 1872 London School of Medicine for Women Governor 1878	Founder National Union for Improving the Education of Women of All Classes [Women's Education Union]. 1871. Founder, Girl's Public Day School Company 1872	19

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
HASLAM, Mrs Anna Maria		Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage 1868 British Women's Liberal Association 1884	LNA. Local Secretary 1871		7
HILL, Miss Joanna M. b. 1836	Suffrage Petition 1866		General Committee for the Medical Education of Women 1872 (Prisoner's Aid Soc. N.S.P.C.C. Boarding out organisation)	Poor Law Guardian	14
HILL, Miss Florence		Bristol and South West Society for Women's Suffrage 1871 British Women's Liberal Assn. 1884	1872 General Committee for the Medical Education of Women 1872 London School of Medicine for Women Governor 1878	Poor Law Guardian	14
LAUDER, Miss Susan Dick		Edinburgh Ladies Education Association 1868 Edinburgh Society for Women's Suffrage contributor 1870 LNA. subscriber 1871 London Society for Women's Suffrage contributor 1872			8
LUCAS, Mrs Margaret, [nee Bright] .1818-1890		National Society for Women's Suffrage Central Cttee. 1871	Executive Cttee. London NSWS. LNA. Executive Committee 1873 Pit Woman's Deputation 1887 President of Bloomsbury Liberal Assn.	Claims to be on Voters List 1868 British Women's Temperance Association President.	22

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
PENNINGTON, Mrs Anna [Mrs Frederick]	NAPSS meeting 1870		Married Women's Property Cttee. 1869-72 LNA. Ladies Committee 1870 NSWS Elected Executive Cttee. 1871 London School of Medicine for Women Governor. 1878		10
PRIESTMAN, Miss Anna b.1828 PRIESTMAN, Miss Mary b. 1830		Bristol and West NSWS subscriber 1871 (Mary) British Women's Liberal Assn, 1884 Temperance (Peace movement Anna killed by 1st World War)	LNA 'Miss' Local secretary 1871	Tax Refusers.	13
SPOTTISWOOD Augusta	Suffrage Petition 1866 Cambridge college meeting 1868	Working Women's College contributor		Poor Law Guardian 1884	8
STEVENSON, Miss Flora C. 1840-1905		Edinburgh SWS sub. 1870 NSWS Central Cttee 1871 London SWS Sub. 1872		Edinburgh School Board	10
STEVENSON, Miss Louisa 1835-1908		Edinburgh SWS 1867-9 donations and subs NSWS Central Cttee. 1871		Association for University Education for Women. first Hon Secretary First woman elected to a Parochial Board	12
TANNER, Mrs Margaret [nee Priestman] b. 1817		Bristol and SW. SWS subscriber 1871 British Women's Liberal Assn. 1884		LNA Treasurer	8

Name	Level 1 Sympathy	Level 2 Support	Level 3 Executive	Level 4 Prime Mover	score
VENTURI, Mrs Emilia [nee Ashurst, also Mrs Sidney Hawkes] 1822-1893		NSWS Central Cttee. 1871	General Cttee for Medical Education of Women 1872 LNA exec. Cttee 1873 MWP Cttee. 1876-82	Editor of <u>The Shield</u> 1871-1886	15
WILSON, Miss Alice			Manchester SWS executive 1868 MWP Cttee. 1869-82 Salford Branch SWS		9

3. Kensington Society members' commitments

The implications of this particular investigation are striking. The members of the Kensington Society, among a group of their social peers, were not only involved in slightly more organisation, but their level of commitment to such organisations was much greater than that of their peers. At the same time, as has been noted, the Kensington Society members also had an unusually high level of experience of employment, and many were working full time at demanding jobs. This exceptionally high level of commitment by members of the Kensington Society needed to be examined in greater detail. Chart 6f shows the Kensington Society members, their occupations and their pattern of involvement in eight selected causes.

Chart 6f Occupations and commitments of Kensington Society Members.

<p>Key.</p> <p>1 1856 Married Women's Property petition</p> <p>2 <u>English Woman's Journal</u> Society for Promoting the Employment of Women. and Langham Place.</p> <p>3 National Association for the Promotion of Social Science</p> <p>4 1864 University Local Examinations campaign.</p> <p>5 Kensington Society. Members who joined first.</p> <p>6 1866 London Association of Schoolmistresses members.</p> <p>7 1866 Signed women's suffrage petition.</p> <p>8 1866-1867 Contributed to Enfranchisement of Women Committee.</p>

Name	Occupation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Miss Annette Akroyd	teacher								
Mrs Andrews									
Miss Armour									
Mrs Atkinson									
Mrs Barker									
Miss Dorothea Beale	School Principal								
Miss Sophia Jex Blake	Teacher/Doctor								
Mme Barbara Bodichon	Artist/Writer								
Miss S.C.Bompas									
Miss Elizabeth A. Bostock	Bedford College founder								
Miss Jessie Boucherett	SPEW. founder								
Miss Emily Bovell	Teacher/Doctor								
Miss Frances Mary Buss	School Principal								
Miss Ellen Charnock	School Principal								
Miss Clayton	Writer								
Miss Frances Power Cobbe	Journalist and lecturer								
Miss Sophia Dobson Collet	Journalist								
Miss Harriet Cook	Secretary [1866 petition]								
Miss Cox									
Miss Isa Craig	Journalist, Secretary NAPSS								
Miss Jane Crow	Secretary SPEW								
Mrs Davey									
Miss Emily Davies	College Founder/Journalist								
Mrs Llewelyn Davies									
Miss Emery									
Mrs Fitch									
Miss Elizabeth Garrett	Doctor School Board Member/Mayor.								
Miss Garth									
Mrs G.Green									
Mrs Emilia Gurney									
Miss Katharine Hare									
Miss Emily Harrison	School Principal								
Miss Hayward									
Miss Ellen Heaton									
Mrs Heaton									
Miss Alice Hutchinson									
[Mrs Hutt]									
Miss Mary-Ann Jenkins									
Miss Eliza H Keary	Writer								

Name	Occupation	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Miss Annie M. Keary	Writer								
Miss Keith									
Miss Gertrude King	Secretary SPEW								
Miss Sara Lawrence									
Miss Alice Malleson	Working Woman's College								
Mrs Charlotte Manning	Historian/Girton . Mistress								
Miss E.A.Manning	Writer								
Miss Frances Martin	Lady Resident, Bedford Col.								
Miss A. May	Poet								
Lady Eleanor Nicholls									
Miss Mary Ellen Nichols	Daily Governess								
Mrs H Phillips									
Miss Mary Eliza Porter	School Principal								
Miss Roberts									
Mme Ronniger	Reader/Suffrage lecturer								
Miss Sanson									
Mrs Frederick Smith									
Mrs Louisa Smith									
Miss Solly									
Mrs Solly									
Miss Ann Sykes Swaine									
Miss Anna Swanwick	Writer								
Miss Helen Taylor	Actress								
Miss Tidman	Girton College Student								
Miss Tirrell									
Mrs Walker									
Miss Agnes Wedd									
Mrs Alice Westlake									
Miss Wilks									
Miss Elizabeth Wolstenholme	School Principal								

The earliest of these eight possible commitments was the 1856 Married Women's Property Committee Membership of the NAPSS and a part in the enterprises at Langham Place, including the English Woman's Journal, represent the 'discussion' area of involvement The University Local Examinations campaign in 1864 is the fourth organisation Kensington Society members who were at the first meeting in 1865, are differentiated from those who joined subsequently The London Association of Schoolmistresses represented the education interest, while signing the 1866 suffrage petition, and subscribing to the 1866-7 expenses of the Franchise for Women represent early support for Suffrage The chart covers a ten year period from 1856 to 1866, and key

feminist preoccupations over those years. The suffrage petition itself was the one interest which united the greatest number of members of the Kensington Society, but even then only thirty-four of them supported it. The campaign for opening the University Local Examinations to girls, two years earlier, had also attracted the signatures of twenty members, and some practical support including committee work, hospitality, and the provision of 'guinea pig' candidates. This particular campaign, with its almost immediate success, may have convinced women to go on to join the Kensington Society. Thirteen members went on to subscribe to the Enfranchisement of Women Committee. The shift of balance between single and married members between petition and committee has already been noted. Helen Taylor expressed some doubts about the financial arrangements in August 1866, which caused Barbara Bodichon to reply to her:

About the accounts they were carefully kept but for a time by several hands. We joked about Miss Boucherett, for example, who gave twenty pounds and spending part of it before handing it over but she gave me all the bills at the last and the accounts are quite clear.¹³

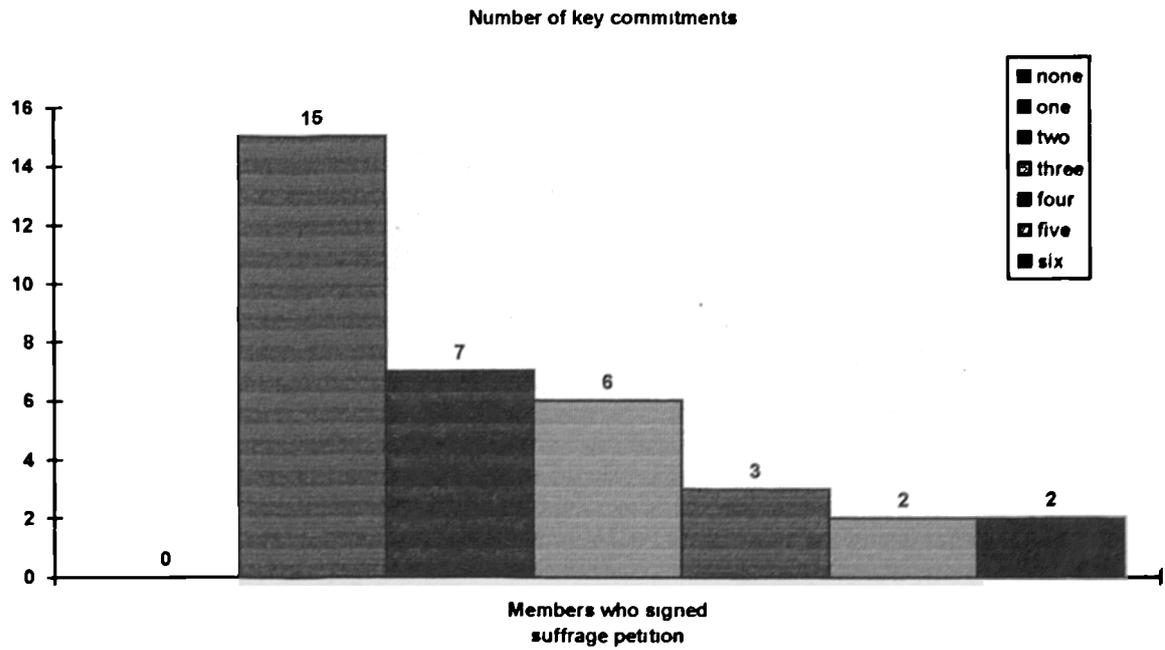
These doubts may explain why Helen Taylor did not contribute to this early committee.¹⁴ Apart from these three commitments, there appear to be few consistent patterns of shared experience of campaigning among members. The striking exceptions to this are Emily Davies, Barbara Bodichon, Isa Craig and Jessie Boucherett, who with Elizabeth Garrett, Elizabeth Bostock and Frances Power Cobbe, appear to be the core group of most active members. The most common set of shared experiences for others appears to be a combination of ULE campaign in 1864, and financial support for suffrage (Mrs Manning, Louisa (Garrett) Smith, Alice Westlake and Elizabeth Wolstenholme (Elmy)). The combination of suffrage petition and ULE campaign was most common among those with two commitments. Where a member only had one other interest out of the seven (besides membership of the Kensington Society), this was always the suffrage petition. Fifteen members had that as their only other commitment.

Charts 6g and 6h show the quantity of commitments of members who signed the suffrage petition compared with those who did not

¹³London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers vol XII 44/117 Barbara Bodichon to Helen Taylor 11th August 1866

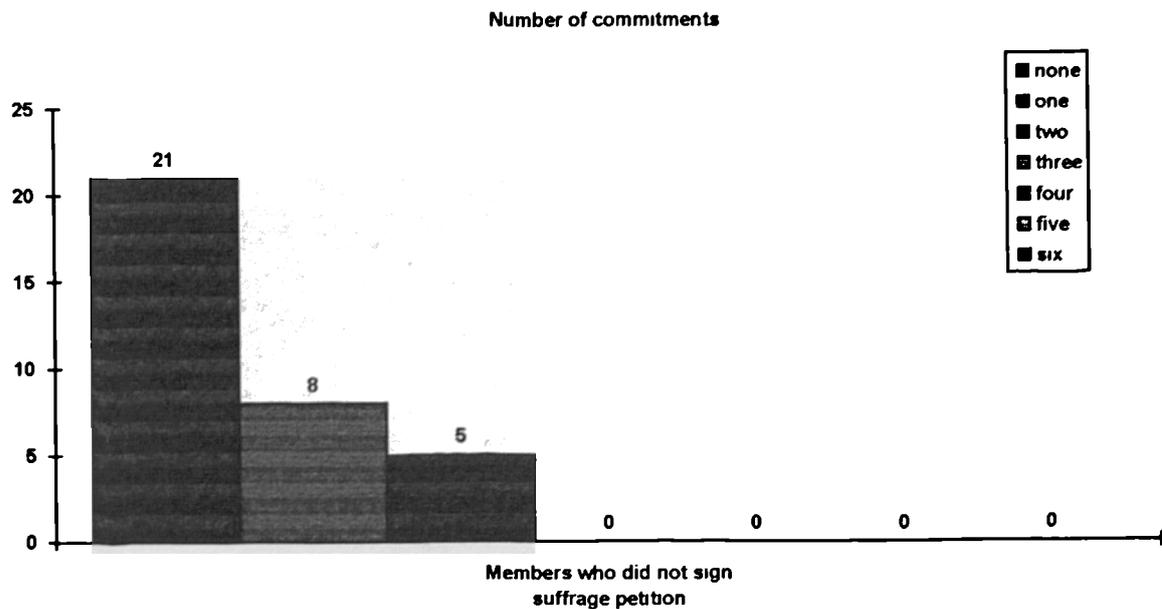
¹⁴For a discussion of Helen Taylor's role in the year after this petition, see A.P.W. Robson, 'The Founding of the National Society for Women's Suffrage, 1866-1867' *Canadian Journal of History* Vol VIII 1973, 1-22

Chart 6g. Number of commitments of Kensington Society members who signed



Kensington Society members who did not sign the suffrage petition had far fewer commitments as well. As can be seen from Chart 6h, twenty-one had no recorded commitment to any of the seven issues covered here. Of the rest, the issue most usually chosen was the ULE campaign. Five were members of the London Association of schoolmistresses, two involved in Langham Place enterprises and two with the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.

Chart 6h. Number of commitments of Kensington Society members who did not sign the suffrage petition.



The Kensington Society was revealed to include an even more exceptional group of women than expected. For those women who were the most active members, it appears to have provided an unique opportunity to pause for reflection, and to gather strength for the next stage of the campaign. Through the suffrage petition it tested the appeal of feminism to a wider public, seeking support from individuals, and exposing the idea to the scrutiny of press and Parliament. Once this had been achieved, the society itself became redundant, as the members moved on to fresh campaigning with renewed vigour. They adopted different strategies, and had a clearer notion of their goals and the obstacles before them. Emily Davies commented to Helen Taylor early in 1868

I send you the Kensington questions for the last time. For several reasons it has been decided to wind up the society at the end of its third year. . I find it very difficult to spare the time for the secretary's work, which, owing to the universal forgetfulness and inaccuracy of mankind, is much more burdensome than might have been expected. And the society does not seem to be so much wanted as when we began. During the last three years the suffrage committees, Schoolmistresses Associations and other organisations have come into existence which supply links between our members and also consume their time and energy so that they have less to spare for writing papers. We shall have one more meeting ¹⁵

¹⁵London School of Economics Mill Taylor Papers. Vol. XIII, 193. 22nd Jan., 1868 Emily Davies to Helen Taylor.

Conclusion

This study has made clear that it is possible to discover quite substantial quantities of information about rank and file or ordinary women using relatively accessible sources, even though the identity of some of the members of the Kensington Society members is still uncertain, as is information about two thirds of the women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition. In terms of practical feminism, of campaigns, and organisations, methods and processes, it has been found possible to trace links, networks and shared experiences. It has been less easy to discover the ways in which such ordinary women related to each other in the context of mid-nineteenth century theoretical feminism. As was suggested at the beginning of the study, an exploration of methods has revealed that campaigning before 1866 was different in personnel and nature from campaigning after that date, especially in the area of suffrage, but also on legal, educational and work issues

Aided by a computer it was possible to carry out a much larger scale study than had been attempted before, and one which isolated an older generation of feminists, born before 1845. At the same time statistical information could be 'fleshed out' by the use of manuscript and biographical material on many women. The significance of these materials could not be appreciated until it was known that the writers/subjects had supported suffrage at this time. The use of sources which were undifferentiated, such as the Census and street and trade directories, alongside selective materials (upon which many previous historians had mainly relied), made it possible to write into the record many women who would otherwise have completely disappeared from the history of the women's movement in its earliest years. Information which has been found on over 600 women has aided considerably our understanding of the of the mid-nineteenth century 'feminist'. In some respects this picture conforms to the stereotype as seen, for example, in the pages of contemporary *Punch*¹. There were more supporters who were single, and middle aged than in the population as a whole. But there were also substantial numbers of 'respectable, orderly and independent' women who were widows, or even married, and many single women who were entrepreneurs running their own businesses successfully. Among the individual rank and file supporters women like Elizabeth French, the Ellis sisters Mary Crudelius and Hannah Pipe (the latter discussed in Chapter Three) clearly subvert the stereotypical view of the mid-Victorian middle class woman as helpless and dependent, or the activist as unwomanly.

¹ A Reform letter from a single lady' *Punch* 5th May 1866 , 192

The significance of earlier moves by an older generation was also discussed in Chapter Three. The ways in which this involvement was found to have laid the foundations for the later activities has become clearer. The older women were sympathetic friends to individuals and mentors to groups. They spoke and acted in public, often in intimidating or controversial circumstances, and they founded key institutions which enabled their younger friends to gain education, work and the opportunity to experience the public world. These women's contribution is only now becoming apparent through the work of Jane Rendall, and Clare Midgley. More work needs to be done on the role of these older women in Bedford College and Queen's College, London, as well as more generally.

The decade before 1866 was a period of intense general debate on social issues, notably in the NAPSS. These debates involved not only the concerns of men and women, but contributions from both. However it was also the decade in which women experimented with a range of organisational devices. The first campaign for married women's property rights, in 1856, used a simple pamphlet-and-petition strategy which was only successful in raising public awareness, but produced little change. The second move, the periodical-with-woman's-club-and-workshops (the English Woman's Journal and Langham Place enterprises including the Society for Promoting the Employment of Women, Victoria Press and the law copying office) again produced little practical change in the work opportunities for middle class women. However it had greater significance in terms of experience of organisation, practical strategies, and working relationships between women. Paradoxically, it was experiences at Langham Place, discussed in Chapter Two, which taught Emily Davies how not to proceed, and it was striking that so few of the key figures at Langham Place, notably Bessie Parkes and Emily Faithfull, joined the Kensington Society. The role of Emily Davies as organiser, and her modification of older campaigning strategies was another aspect of the decade before 1866 which was particularly significant. Her swift and successful campaign for the opening of the University Local Examinations to girls in 1864 was a dramatic example of how a group of women could take on, and convince an academic body. Using trial examinations and a printed memorial, as well as the more conventional committee and hand-written memorial, her end was achieved swiftly. The target was, as it turned out, 'soft', in that the examinations were new, and presumably their organisers had less deeply entrenched attitudes than the House of Commons, or the Universities of Cambridge and Oxford. Emily Davies saw the need to involve men in the campaigning process, and it was after the reception of the suffrage petition that she argued for the separation of the education and suffrage campaigns.

The detailed investigation of the Kensington Society in Chapter Four showed that it was not an informal tea-party discussion group joined by ladies of leisure. The perception that it was a middle class group was found to be true, but the idea that it was formed entirely of members of a pre-existing social circle was found to be erroneous. The members of the Kensington Society were found to be middle class, but with a far higher proportion of women with experience of work than had previously been thought. They were also more active in all types of feminist campaigning than their contemporaries. Members were found to have had commitment to women's education, employment, legal and social issues. They shared campaigning experience which included Anti-Slavery, publishing, educational and employment organisations dating back to the 1840's. They used their shared experience and connections to collect signatures for the petition country-wide.

The role of Emily Davies as a strategist has already been discussed. In the formation of the Kensington Society, she achieved a remarkable fusion of women with a range of work experience and creativity, older mentors and educators and young women setting out on careers as doctors and teachers. She also appears not to have involved some activists, like Bessie Parkes, Matilda Hays and Emily Faithfull, whose methods had not proved as successful as her own (or with whom she personally found difficulty in working!). The Kensington Society was also found to have been another medium whereby the older generation, in this case the educators, nurtured and encouraged a younger generation of women cast adrift from Bedford and Queen's Colleges into an unsympathetic world. The investigation showed a remarkable group of women, including Helen Taylor, Barbara Bodichon, Elizabeth Garrett, Jessie Boucherett, Frances Power Cobbe, Charlotte Manning and, of course, Emily Davies, as they formulated the idea of the petition, collected signatures and then presented and publicised it. All these women (either already or in the future) were to be remembered for a range of other 'single minded' successes. Here their ability to co-operate, and support each other was demonstrated.

The petition itself, (preserved thanks to Emily Davies' enthusiasm for adequate public relations) was examined in Chapter Four. It was essential to this study, since it gave access to information about rank and file individuals by identifying and locating them. This information revealed that the supporters were from a much wider range of class background than had previously been obvious from the existing lists of 'leader' signatures. It made clear the age of many of the women, and their marital status. Suffrage was a concern of single women in their thirties and forties, but there were also significant numbers of older women, and many who were, or had been, married. Women who supported this suffrage petition were from a wide range of class, though most were middle

class. Although single middle aged women predominated, there was also a significant number of married women and widows who signed. Women in the sample who were heads of household were examined. Working households were found to be larger and more co-operative in structure than households with private income.

The number of women who were heads of household, either widowed or single also became clear, prompting the further investigation recorded in Chapter Five. The geography of the petition, which covered the whole British Isles, was found to be of less significance than the 'social geography' of connections radiating out from the Kensington Society. Most remarkable in this social geography was the role of those teachers who had signed the 1864 University Local Examinations Memorial, and who went on to canvass not just their own kind, but a whole range of other women heads of household, often from a different class. Also of note were the networks of connection between Quaker women. It is likely that similar webs of connection probably existed in the families of non-Quakers, which have not survived in the same way because they were not recorded and preserved so carefully. These links must have connected many of the 'lost women', who were not traced.

The list of names and addresses also made possible the analysis of the very different patterns of canvassing of individual Kensington Society members. Elizabeth Garrett in Suffolk, Mrs Heaton in Leeds and Barbara Bodichon in Sussex each went about the task in a very different way. Elizabeth Garrett called upon close family, older friends of her mother. Through one of them, she reached other older women, who were probably past Chartist supporters. Barbara Bodichon, true to her argument about the plight of the female heads of household, found a farmer and women shopkeepers, and a range of local tradesmen and worthies in her rural locality. Several of those she canvassed had husbands with the vote in 1866. Mrs Heaton and her sister-in-law, in contrast, do not appear to have called upon family or friends, or trades people they patronised.. They appear to have carried out a street by street canvass, in the working class areas near their homes. This variety of canvassing strategies, reflecting very different expectations of sympathy from a surprisingly wide range of sources, contrasted strikingly with the experience of Helen Taylor. Her correspondence showed that her cautious requests for support from family, friends and acquaintances elicited very mixed responses. The process of canvassing itself was shown not to be as straightforward as previously thought.

As was also shown in Chapter Four, the strategies evolved by Emily Davies in the 1864 University Local Examinations, and the rank and file supporters she had gathered among teachers, have been found to be crucial in the collection and presentation of the 1866 suffrage petition. However, the publicity which the publication and distribution of

the petition brought had bad as well as good aspects. It could be that many teachers and others who withdrew public support from the cause after 1866 may have done so fearing that their livelihoods might be adversely affected by more such publicity. Other innovations, such as the publication of specifically feminist periodicals and the preparedness of women to speak in public were found not to have a smooth progress. Fewer and fewer women spoke at the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science Meetings, and the English Woman's Journal was plagued by low circulation figures and financial troubles as well as infighting among its editorial staff. The post-1866 suffrage campaign seemed to have given the required boost to both public speaking and feminist publications.

The biographical information which was made accessible through the petition made it possible to build up a more detailed picture of the life 'experiences' in Chapter Five. In the case of the Kensington Society members in particular, it was found that they had experience of work, and that in many cases, this experience was of work which involved quite large responsibilities. Again the perception of the society as a group of amateurs, only interested in employment issues as a philanthropic activity was undermined.

The case study of fifty households where a woman was head provided a new view of the experience of being single or widowed in 1866. It was found that women with private income tended to live in fairly small households. Households which were dependent on work for their income tended to be much larger, gathering family members, lodgers, pupils, boarders servants and other workers under one roof. The scale of the households indicated that such units could be very successful, and also that they might attract lone women to them, who in turn would contribute their work or money to the household, or be nurtured by it. The strategies which were used to strengthen and sustain such households appear from this study to have actually been different from the way they had previously been represented. The small school, lodging house or small business were found to range from small, to quite large concerns, serving customers from wide social background. There was a stereotype of the solitary, helpless, spinster or widow. However among this sample were to be found successful co-operative self-supporting households. Members of such households would have received immediate practical advantage from the acquisition of the vote and the commercial credibility it conferred.

The suspicion that the Kensington Society and the 1866 suffrage petition existed at a pivotal point in campaigns for women's rights has been confirmed by the examination of shared commitment to organisations in Chapter Six. This examination showed that some women continued active in consistent ways before and after 1866. But some women, particularly teachers and those identified as heads of household, did not continue

to support suffrage publicly. At the same time, more married women contributed to the campaign following their initial support in June 1866, and several spouses joined them in subsequent suffrage campaigning. The activities of the Reform League, only weeks after the petition was presented, and the fall of the government may easily have caused a loss of confidence in many women who signed. The contempt with which the suggestion of women's suffrage was received in the House of Commons. must also have been discouraging. In Manchester subsequently, an intensive canvass of women heads of household was pursued, including the presentation at the polls of a woman whose name had accidentally been placed on the voters' register, and some women went to court to gain the privilege. The publicity surrounding such attempts might easily have affected the livelihood of these women, and may have discouraged others from pursuing what seemed to be such a hopeless course.

Between 1865 and 1866 feminism was in a state of flux, because of the success of the first education campaign, and the reform agitation. Early initiatives like the English Woman's Journal had foundered, the NAPSS. had been found wanting. The Kensington Society brought together a group of activists, commentators, young teachers, older mentors and key enthusiasts. This group discussed issues of concern, and focused on the vote as one on which to campaign. The campaign which immediately followed drew on the women's connections and shared experience alone. They established credibility for the notion of women's suffrage, which formed the basis for the mixed committees and suffrage societies which followed immediately afterwards. There was a shift in direction, a gathering of new recruits, and a splitting off of the education and employment campaigns from that for suffrage. What had been unified action became fragmented, (or specialised). There is evidence of a fault line running through the strata of women revealed by the investigation. Some come to suffrage and other campaigning as a result of the events surrounding the petition. For others it is the last move in their commitment to change. For some it is the only occasion of public commitment. For a small number it is a point on a continuum of commitment to public issues, not exclusively to do with women. Many of the women in this last group have been considered by Olive Banks, Philippa Levine and Jane Rendall.² This investigation found far less consistency and continuity than they did in

² Olive Banks, Becoming a feminist: The social origins of 'first wave' feminism. Athens Georgia. University of Georgia Press, 1986.

Philippa Levine, Feminist lives in Victorian England. Private roles and public commitment. Oxford, Basil Blackwell, 1990.

Jane Rendall The Origins of modern feminism: Women in Britain, France and the United States, 1780-1860. Basingstoke, Macmillan 1985.

the commitment of these women. They were not a cohesive group with common goals, but rather a far looser network of individuals linked by a variety of connections, which could include common ideals, but for which family, friendship and a whole raft of common experiences and interests provide the linkage, and in which difference is often as striking a feature as similarity.

Melanie Nolan and Caroline Daley suggest that, world-wide:

Suffrage history has been out of favour with historians for many years. Women's suffrage suffered from an association with 'first wave' feminism with its narrow class and racial base and its commitment to liberal politics... seen...as elite and old fashioned. ...Those historians who did write about it did so through the prism of radical, militant and socialist suffragists...Since the 1980's...non militant suffragists are being recovered, as are their working class sisters.³

This investigation, focusing as it did on the 'first wave' of British feminists, found that this characterisation was indeed erroneous. Though the leaders were connected with Liberal politicians, they were independent of party, until men were included in the suffrage societies after 1865. Leaders may have come from a narrow class base, but their supporters came from a much wider spectrum of society, ranging from some aristocrats to charwomen and daily governesses. The signature of Sarah Parker Remond, an African-American, is an indication that those women who canvassed valued her support. If historians used a radical, militant and socialist prism to observe the women discussed in this paper before 1866, before men were involved, and the formal societies were formed, they would find socialist ideas expressed, for example, by Barbara Bodichon, radical approaches to dress and population issues lived out in daily life by a woman like E W French. Radical and 'socialist' sentiments in Barbara Bodichon had to be modified, at Emily Davies' insistence, in order to gain the support of the men, whom it was felt would enable the changes to happen. The issues debated by the Kensington Society might seem to be mild and uncontroversial, on duty to parents and role in society, but it should be remembered that this was the public face of the Society, in the papers for discussion which went into the homes of the members. What was said in the privacy of meetings has not survived, and even Emily Davies, cautious as she was, and aware of the effect that

Jane Rendall ed. Equal or different: Women's politics 1800-1914. Oxford, Blackwell, 1987.

³Melanie Nolan and Caroline Daley. 'International feminist perspectives on suffrage: an introduction.' in Melanie Nolan and Caroline Daley. Suffrage and beyond. International feminist perspectives. New York, New York University Press, 1994. pp. 6-7

mistakes might have on her campaigns, allowed that freedom was possible in the discussions between a remarkably able, and successfully entrepreneurial group of women.⁴

By focusing on support for suffrage, and other feminist issues such as education and employment opportunities at a particular, limited, period of time, this investigation provides a 'snapshot' of women who were active. It offers a view of the strata of a movement in its early stages. What has been surprising is the inconsistency which has been found to exist. What initially appeared to be a seamless transition from Anti-Slavery, through the Langham Place enterprises, educational improvements, the formation of the Kensington Society, the collection of the petition, culminating in the formation of the early suffrage societies, when approached through the prism of the lives of individual women involved, appears much more problematic. Women enter and leave the events in an almost random way. It is only amongst the most active group, those members of the Kensington Society who also supported suffrage, that anything remotely approaching this seamless pattern existed. Yet few of them shared all of their commitments, and few had commitments which spanned the whole period from 1840 to 1870. On the other hand, those women who 'dipped into' campaigning, even by the solitary act of signing the suffrage petition were clearly very important to each stage of the process of change. The active leaders were having to seek out a new constituency for each new campaign, and were to discover that the networks of friendship had to be mined afresh as each problem was tackled. Perhaps this influenced Emily Davies' decision to concentrate on educational issues and to detach herself from suffrage campaigning for a while. Although it was successful to call on the teachers who had supported the University Local Examinations campaign in 1864 in the initial move for suffrage, those teachers clearly did not feel able to continue this dual support. Yet their support in 1864 had achieved the desired outcome. The study of a large group of women over a short period of time has served to demonstrate the significance of the myriad individual acts of support without which the lifelong activists could not function successfully. This does not detract in any way from the importance of the prime movers, but suggests questions about this symbiotic relationship between rank and file and leaders which merit further investigation.

Teachers were also shown to be significant in the twenty years before 1866. Parallel with the suffrage campaign after 1866 they developed an organic, subversive, influence for change which can be traced back directly to the two colleges, Bedford and

⁴One prism through which this early period of feminist activity necessarily has to be viewed is that provided by the selection of documents preserved and ordered by Emily Davies. The Family Chronicle is a manuscript compendium-cum-autobiography, containing long extracts from letters, as well as printed ephemera.

Queen's College, London. At the turn of the century Blackheath High School, a Girls' Public Day School Company school, drew its teachers and head teachers almost exclusively from its own sister schools and Bedford and Queen's Colleges. (and some of the younger ones also attended Girton College).⁵ After Elizabeth Garrett, half the next cohort of medical students had connections with Queen's College, London. Principals like Hannah Pipe and her colleagues the Misses Metcalf might emulate the boys public schools and admire Arnold at Rugby. However they employed as teachers women trained under the supervision of Elizabeth Reid and Emily Sturch, and men who had taught at Queen's and Bedford. The later generation of British women who voted in 1928 probably included a substantial proportion (in the middle class at least) whose education originated from these 'feminist' roots.

Shared education in the early years of the two colleges, between 1848 and 1866 was found to be one of the connections which was drawn on in 1866. In adolescence, in these colleges, some well-to-do women mixed with their peers who would have to work. The security which they enjoyed was revealed as unstable. Education became vital to these women as an insurance against the personal disaster which middle class financial failure represented. Mrs Reid might give out bursaries to needy young women, but Bessie Parkes herself (at one time a part-time student) in later life, was to lose her income and become needy, suffering abandonment by friends as well as financial hardship. There were indications, for example the fact that many addresses given in the suffrage petition are small schools, which suggested that some at least of the 'missing' women who signed the suffrage petition in 1866 were teachers or governesses.

It was suggested at the beginning of this thesis that growing confidence as a result of the success of the education campaign of 1864 was one reason why suffrage was seen as an achievable goal. The success of collecting the petition is in many ways more remarkable than its modest impact in Parliament. The Kensington Society had this one achievement to its credit, particularly in that it allowed Barbara Bodichon an uniquely perceptive and experienced audience on which to test her thesis. The unique mix of women, including as it did so many women with access to different networks must have contributed to the revision and preparation of the idea for a wider public. Through members like Helen Taylor and Emilia Gurney, and Mrs Manning, there was family access to MPs and parliamentary administrators. The Society's members, through the petition, can be seen as the originators of the formal suffrage campaign. The society was also very successful in mobilising social networks to produce a list of names which represented

⁵Blackheath High School . GPDST. Archive. List of teachers.

women from a wide range of family background, work experience, age, marital status and geographical location.

This thesis challenges the view of the women's movement as being limited, amateur and socially exclusive in the mid nineteenth century. Networks of friendship and support were found to be more far reaching and complex than had previously been shown (though this extent had been suspected). At the same time this support was found to be less consistent, and more dependent on individual choice, than had previously been suggested. The developments after 1866, which involved mixed, formal committee structures, absorbing the organisations for women's advancement into the broader structure of Victorian social organs produced a change of emphasis. There was a move to exclusivity of aims, and the idea of 'contamination' by association with controversial campaigns enters the discourse on issues.

There also appears to have been a dropping away of support by less well to do middle class and upper working class women. It may be that the activities of the Reform League or the realities of challenging the status quo at the polling booth as was attempted in Manchester at the first election after the 1867 Reform Act might have discouraged many women. There might have been real consequences in their business lives when customers, particularly of schools, discovered that they had signed this public petition. Or it may be that their continued support was concealed by the organisational changes. The emphasis on subscription and organisational structure and the employment of paid canvassers placed the suffrage societies firmly in the realm of the upper middle classes. As the campaign focused on Parliament itself, it was more essential to gather the support of the well to do, whose men already had the vote, and the power to put pressure on their MPs. The greengrocer's wife or the daily governess, the proprietor of a small girls' school, the court dressmaker probably could not afford subscriptions, and might have had little time for meetings. They were powerless, and lacking in influence. They would also probably have felt uncomfortable in the social group which organised the suffrage societies. This is not to suggest that they may not still have added their signatures to the regular local petitions which were sent to Parliament in their hundreds over the next three or four decades. But they returned to anonymity.

An active middle class woman like Mrs McCulloch could gather together over 100 regular subscribers to a suffrage periodical in Dumfries where she had been the only person to sign in 1866. But in Stroud, in Gloucestershire, where thirty-seven women signed in 1866, it was possible for Lady Amberley to say that her public meeting marked the beginning of suffrage agitation in the town, and considered that there was only one supporter already there. The names of the women who signed in Stroud with only one

exception, do not appear on the subscription list of the Bristol and South West Society for Women's Suffrage. The campaign had perhaps changed direction, and was concentrating on gathering 'good' (i.e. upper middle class) supporters.

The quality of the connections between the women of the Kensington Society, and between the women who signed the 1866 suffrage petition is quite remarkable. These were not women who were able to attend large public meetings. They were used to social groupings of ones and twos, tens or twenties. Where young women gathered socially, or at Queen's College or Bedford College they were chaperoned by older women. At the colleges there were Lady Visitors charged with guarding the women against the male lecturers, but also against unfettered conversation with other young women in the class. Dorothea Beale imposed a rule of silence between girls, except for a very carefully supervised break. This, she explained, was because in a school of 200 day girls, in a small town, mixing of different levels of the middle class was unavoidable. She expected that the girls' parents would arrange a servant as escort to and from school, so that they could control their daughters' social mixing. When the Kensington Society was formed, it was to bring together women who had not necessarily met socially, though each member was known to at least one other member. It also permitted meeting of minds across geographical distance, allowing physically and intellectually isolated women like Ellen Nichols to join in the debate by correspondence. Early suffrage meetings, like that of October 1865 at the Steinthals' home in Manchester, involved five or six individuals or couples. The London Association of Schoolmistresses was invited to meet in Elizabeth Garrett's drawing room.

The ability of the middle classes to travel, inclined them to do so. The obverse of meeting new friends when in unfamiliar places was the difficulty of getting sufficient people together in one place to organise. An organisation on the scale of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, with its annual meetings in provincial locations was of great help to women, in giving them a regular venue where they could listen to debate. But as has been seen, women were still reluctant to join in the arguments and respond to the discussions in the meetings. Most of their interaction with each other must have gone on between sessions, or perhaps on the outings to local institutions which were organised. This again was an opportunity for meeting and talking in small groups, rather than for large scale meetings. Within this context the Kensington Society was far more revolutionary than it might at first have seemed. It brought together a large group of women who did not necessarily know each other. On the other hand, with its domestic setting, presided over by a respectable older woman, it was also as reactionary in appearance as any concerned parent or husband might desire.

One factor which recurs in the lives of the women is an interest in, and an input from abroad. Some of the women had travelled, and used their journeys to acquire information, and discover the differing 'experience' of women in other cultures. There was an interest in far flung place, which many would never have the opportunity to visit, notably India and America, but also Europe and North Africa. There was contact with American feminists, and the dialogue between the 'Transatlantic sisterhood' (as Clare Midgley has described it) deserves, and is now receiving⁶ thorough examination. The interest in India pervades the period, and women like Charlotte Manning, who studied its history, and Sophia Dobson Collet who became an expert on Indian Theism are not unusual. Women in Anti-Slavery turned to Indian slavery issues in the later part of their campaigns, and one such was Elizabeth Pease Nichol. The desire to change the lives of Indian women and girls, an imperialist civilising mission motivated a young woman like Annette Akroyd, who set up a girls school in India in 1872, after having been trained at Bedford College. But this was not only a one way process. One of the factors which finally established the necessity for admitting women to the medical profession was India. A number of English women in India were horrified by the lack of 'qualified' European medical attention for women in purdah. Their demand, on returning to England, that they should be allowed to train as doctors to minister to these women was conceded. Once this precedent had been established, it was much easier for other women to train to practice in Britain. Sarah P. Remond, the African American Anti-Slavery lecturer, demonstrated to women in Britain that it was possible to lecture in public without loss of femininity. After supporting the Suffrage petition with her signature, she then went to Florence to qualify as a physician.

An area which deserves more attention is the role of the men who were on hand, in the Law Amendment Society, the NAPSS, as founders of Queen's College London, as supporters of Bedford College, as shareholders of the English Woman's Journal, as MP's who proposed or supported women's suffrage. Clearly they possessed professional expertise, financial standing and access to the public world. Women had none of these, in sufficient quantity to influence events, so the help of men was essential. Particular individuals like F.D. Maurice,⁷ John Ruskin,⁸ and others had influence which has not been

⁶Sandra Stanley Holton 'From Anti-Slavery to Suffrage Militancy: the Bright circle, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and the British Women's Movement' in Caroline Daley and Melanie Nolan Suffrage and Beyond, International Feminist perspectives. New York, New York University Press, 1994.

⁷F.D. Maurice. Christian Socialist and founder of Queen's College, London.

⁸ John Ruskin. His writing was, like John Stuart Mill's, seen as an inspiration to many of the prime movers, but yet whose criticism caused Anna Mary Howitt to destroy all her paintings and never paint again.

satisfactorily assessed. It could be argued that Barbara Bodichon with her Brief Summary, in plain language of the most important laws concerning women.⁹ in 1854 initiated the Married Women's Property campaign. But lawyers in the Law Amendment Society, increasingly concerned by the numbers of single women with no man legally responsible for them, encouraged and advised her, and it is not clear where the original impetus came from. Similarly the exact origins of the 1866 suffrage petition, between Barbara Bodichon, John Stuart Mill, Helen Taylor, or the Kensington Society as a whole is difficult to establish.

The professionalisation of medicine and the law was increasing during the period of this study. Professional organisations, with examinations and certification were established. How was this process significant for women? It appears to have placed obstacles in their way, closing the door to women once one or two had passed through. But there was also a positive side to this professionalisation, in that the whole system of examinations and the range of subjects was under review, providing a window of opportunity for women. One example of this being so was the University Local Examinations. These examinations were relatively new, and were opened to women with comparative ease. The assault on the well established bastion of the Oxford and Cambridge degrees took a far longer period to succeed.

This thesis has sought to present material which will lead to a greater understanding of the underlying mechanisms of early feminism. It has attempted to provide approaches to an understanding of these women as members of a group and as individuals. The thesis uses a 'snapshot' of a large group of women brought together by a common cause between 8th May and 7th June 1866. By this means it has focused attention on the successes and failures of the women's campaigning strategies before that date, and upon the changes that occurred, especially in the area of suffrage campaigning, after that date. For those who may see the suffrage issue as one which emerges as important only at the beginning of the twentieth century, it puts forward two ideas. One is that quite complex and very significant moves were made well before 1866. The other is that the dramatic changes which occurred in campaigning personnel and strategies immediately following the 1866 petition might have actually interfered with swift progress towards achieving the vote for women in Britain. The 1,499 women supporting the

⁹Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon 'A Brief Summary, in Plain Language, of the Most Important Laws Concerning Women: Together with a Few Observations Thereon. (1854)' in Candida Ann Lacey, ed., Barbara Leigh Smith Bodichon and the Langham Place Group. Routledge and Kegan Paul, London, 1987. pp. 21-23.

petition risked much in this public statement, and their investment of sympathy, undeniably generous and high minded, was not to bear fruit for more than forty years. All the women who signed the suffrage petition in 1866 were remarkable, in that they were prepared to take a stand on an issue which seemed ridiculous to the majority, or at least to that majority of middle class men who had power. The comment of Harriet Grote, one of the older women who signed the petition, written some twenty years earlier to a women friend, could be seen as equally appropriate to the women who supported women's suffrage in 1866.

The investment we make of our generous and lofty sympathies is, like every other investment liable to the risk of heavy loss, or selling out.¹⁰

¹⁰Lady Eastlake. Mrs Grote. London, John Murray, 1880.

Appendix One

The Sample

The sample investigated in this thesis consisted of the 1,499 women whose names appear on the printed version of the 1866 Suffrage Petition presented to J.S.Mill¹, and the seventy names which appear on the list of Kensington Society Members.² There is an overlap since thirty-five Kensington Society members also signed the Suffrage petition.

Addresses were available for all Kensington Society members, and for 1466 women signing the Suffrage petition. The geographical information was based on the town or village in which women lived, though in some areas, it was possible to study smaller areas because full addresses were given.

Marital status was given in the Kensington Society List, but many women signing the petition did not give a title. However some extra information was discovered through Census and directories. It was particularly difficult to establish whether a woman was a widow or married. It was assumed that a woman listed as a head of household in a directory was widowed.

The rest of the tables are based on a shifting database, since all other information about the women was lacking in consistency. In some cases a woman was traced through an entry in a street directory which gave the occupation of a male member of the household, but no further information. In many cases only one piece of information might be available about a woman, and that might be membership of an organisation, her own occupation, or a male family member's occupation.

Because of the nature of the sources, some of the conclusions drawn are more tentative than others. The geographical distribution is certain, but information about other aspects of the women is more problematic. Beyond address, some information was found about more than 600 women. It is important to emphasise that the 'missing' women were probably different in kind from those of whom traces have been found, and that the information found can only hint at the individual lives of these women, and do not pretend to be statistically significant.

¹ Sarah Avery, Kate F. Ackland, Annie E. S. Acworth et al. To the Honourable the Commons of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in Parliament assembled.... No place of publication, No publisher, n.d. [Girton College, Blackburn Collection. Suffrage pamphlets.] The date

² Girton College, Emily Davies Papers. ED IX /KEN 1

Appendix Two.

Table of Female Heads of Household.

Key. 1. Working Family. 2. Dependant Family. 3. Partners. 4. Marital Status:- Single, Married, Widowed.

Name	1	2	3	Employees	Lodgers, pupils, guests	source of income	Year of birth	4
Countess d'Avigdor		4		5 servants			1818	M
Mrs Elizabeth Barker				1 servant		fund holder	1798	W
Miss Dorcas Barnett			1		6 boy pupils.	School	1823	S
[Miss Jane and Miss Fanny Barrett.] Mrs Barrett is householder			2	1 servant		Mrs Barrett is a Provision Dealer		W
Miss Marianne Barton				3 teachers 2 servants		School	1831	S
Mrs Margaret Boder	1	1				son is druggists assistant.	1805	W
Mrs Maria Burrows.				Cook , maid, companion		Retired plumbers widow	1787	W
Mrs Henrietta Carter				1 servant	2 lodgers	Lodging House Keeper.	1811	W
Mrs Mary Cumming			1			Housekeeper in offices with daughter	1802 1838	W. S
Mrs Sophia Elton		2		2 servants 2 governesses	3 scholars	school	1832	W
Mrs Eliza Embleton.	4					Bookseller and stationer.	1814	W
Miss Louisa Featherstone		1			Aunt (an annuitant)	'Independent' (school)	1807	S
Mrs Sarah Fisher	1				3 lodgers	Lodging House Keeper	1813	W
Mrs Eleanor French		5		1 servant 12 farm workers		Farmer employing 8 men and 4 boys.	1828	W
Mrs Sophia Gaddum				Cook, maid, waiter.		Income from warehouse	1822	W

Name	1	2	3	Employees	Lodgers, pupils, guests	source of income	Year of birth	4
Miss Lucy Goss				General servant	lodger	Annuitant (+ lodger)	1816	S
Mrs Maria Grey		2		Cook, 2 maids, footman	widowed mother and sister[Emily Shirreff]		1816	W
Mrs Susanna Hacking	1		2	4 employees		Milliner employing 4	1816	W
Mrs Louisa Hayes	2	1		1 servant			1823	W
Miss Matilda Hays			2	3 servants	Emily Faithfull, Jane Crow.	Writer of Misc. Literature [Langham Place Offices]	1821	S
Miss Ellen Heaton				Cook, Housemaid		Paper house and railway shares	1816	S
Miss Anna Jack					Miss Sarah Kenrick, Miss Parry, Miss Wreford	Boarding House Keeper	1828	S
Anna and Eliza Keary	4			3 servants	[4 young cousins]	Authors	1825 1829	S S
Mrs Mary Ann Lalor.			2	5 servants		school	1800	W
Miss Ann R.Lamb					A. Sharp E McEwan	No Occupation	1821	S
Mrs Leather	3						?	W
Miss Jane E Lewin	3			3 servants	[mother, brother, niece]		1820	S
Mrs Barbara Loftus			3		1 lodger	Shopkeeper [+3 daughters]	1799	W
Mrs Frances Lumley		4				Laundress	1818	W
Miss Alice Malleon				5 servants		'No Occupation'	1833	S
Miss Emily Maltby		3		Governess, Cook, parlour maid	[2 nephews, 1 niece b. Madras.]	Fund holder	1806	S
Mrs Jane Martineau	1	2		2 general servants	[2 daughters + sister]	Fund holder	1792	W
Mrs Ann Northwood				3 general servants		Dairy keeper	1789	W
Mrs Mary Ann Porter		5		5 servants	[1 daughter, 1 sister, 2 governess nieces] Miss Tagg	Landowner	1811	W

Name	1	2	3	Employees	Lodgers, pupils, guests	source of income	Year of birth	4
Miss Mary Potticary	2	1				Fund holder	1796	S
Mrs Harriot Sheeran	5					[Husband is Quartermaster Officer]	1830	M
Miss Mary Shepherd					Boarder [a Jennier]	Pattern setter	1818	S
Misses Catherine and Anna Swanwick				5 servants			1813 1814	S S
Mrs Eliza Temple	4			Asst. Governess, Housekeeper, cook.	12 boarders aged 9-12	School	1820	W
Miss Eliza Thomson					Aunt [also annuitant]	Annuitant	1821	S
Mrs Emma Tingle	2	2				Charwoman	1832	W
Mrs Catherine Turner				2 servants		Retired Schoolmistress	1797	W
Mrs Elizabeth Vialls	2			1 servant	1 lodger	Coffee House Keeper. [2 daughter are coffee house keepers too.]	?1816 /?1813	W
Miss Eleanor Watson				1 servant	1 lodger	Interest in shares	1797	S
Mary A, Annie and Martha Ward			3	1 servant, 10 employees		Millinery and Lace employing 10 young women.	1824 1833 1835	S S S
Mrs Mary Welford				1 servant		'no profession'	1819	W
Mrs Mary Whittaker	1	1		1 servant		[son] Manchester warehouseman	1790	W
Miss Alice Wilson	3				[widowed Mother, and sisters Sarah and A.D.]	Dealers in Baby linen, fancywork and smallware.	1825	S
Mrs Ann Wilson				1 servant		Income from dividends	1806	W
Miss Hannah Pipe			1	2 teachers 4 servants	26 pupils	School	1831	S

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Society

Association for the
Promotion of the
Employment of Women

Association for the
University Education of
Women

Bristol and South West
Society for Women's
Suffrage

Subscription List 1871

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List of Members and Executive 1871, Local Committees in Connection with the Central Committee 1871, Central Committee Rules and Aims

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National Society for
Women's Suffrage

Executive Committee list Jan. 1871 Subscription list.

Emancipation Society.	1862.
Girton College	<u>Register</u>
Governesses Benevolent Institution.	<u>Ladies Committee List.</u> 1847
International Association of Women	<u>England Committee</u> 1/9/1870
	<u>Ladies Appeal against the Contagious diseases Act.</u> 1870
Ladies London Emancipation Society	
London Association of Schoolmistresses.	
London Society for Women's Suffrage	<u>Subscriptions and donations</u> 1872 <u>Letter to the House of Lords</u> 1885
Manchester Board of Schoolmistresses	
Manchester Society for Women's Suffrage	<u>Executive Committee</u> 1868
National Association for the Promotion of Social Science	<u>Sessional Proceedings</u> 1857-1886 <u>Transactions</u> 1857-1886 <u>Social Science Meeting at Liverpool</u> 1858 <u>Twenty-fifth anniversary</u> 1882
Royal Holloway College	<u>Committee list</u> 1875
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