



*Crossing the line : women and the Railway Mission 1881-1901*

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# **Crossing the Line: Women and the Railway Mission 1881-1901**

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University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the lives and work of the women who worked for the Railway Mission during the last two decades of the nineteenth century. The Railway Mission was established in 1881 with the aim of evangelising the large railway workforce of the late-Victorian period. Significant numbers of women worked for the Mission: they have, to date, been hidden from history. This thesis combines Mission records with census and related data to give an unprecedented insight into their lives and work.

The thesis adds a new dimension to the study of women's religious and philanthropic work. Whereas previous research has focused mainly on women's work with other women and with children, this thesis explores women's work within the male-dominated environment of the Victorian railway industry. The study contributes to current debates about the flexibility of 'separate spheres' in its examination of the ways in which women moved fluidly between the home and the industrialised spaces of Victorian railway infrastructure. Moreover, it questions the adequacy of a class conflict model for interpreting the working relationships which developed between middle-class women and working-class railwaymen.

Previous research has emphasised the extent to which women, as both employees and as passengers, were marginalised in Victorian railway culture. This thesis shows how women, as religious workers, were, in contrast, able to gain legitimate access to railway spaces denied to other women. Finally, while there has been a significant amount of research into the synergies and tensions between aspects of Victorian railway and religious cultures, this has centred around the railway as a corporate entity and religion as an institutionalised cultural force. The thesis provides an alternative focus in its discussion of the ways in which religious women and railwaymen worked together as individuals to create areas of commonality.

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Fig. 1 Elizabeth Gates, Superintendent, Railway Mission, Brighton

[www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk](http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk)



Fig. 2 Brighton Railway Mission Hall

[www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk](http://www.mybrightonandhove.org.uk)

## Introduction

‘Our Miss Go-Ahead – womanly, modest, straightforward, nervous but kindly’ – this was the description of the Railway Mission’s ideal lady missionary. The fictional Miss Go-Ahead was the subject of an article in the *Railway Signal*, the monthly journal of the Railway Mission, in November 1888. This was one of many appeals made by the Railway Mission to attract women, frequently referred to as ‘lady friends’ in the *Railway Signal*, to work with the Mission in order to bring religion to the railwaymen of Victorian Britain. According to the article, the Railway Mission wanted their ‘lady friends’ to be a ‘quiet sort of person, charming and womanly with a quiet manner.’<sup>1</sup> The thesis will compare this stereotypical ideal with the realities of life for the actual women who worked for the Railway Mission during the late-Victorian period.

The Railway Mission was one of a large number of evangelical organisations which emerged during the latter part of the nineteenth century. An inherent part of evangelical belief was the need to convert people to active Christianity. Evangelicals had strong religious beliefs both about their own behaviour and about the beliefs and behaviour of others and failure to convert others to share their evangelical belief was to condone what they considered to be the sinful behaviour of others. Sin led to eternal damnation and the aim of the Railway Mission was to convert the large railway workforce of late-Victorian Britain and to lead its men to salvation.

The Railway Mission, founded in 1881, developed from the Railway Boys’ Mission. This was established as an attempt to keep the large number of boys working in London’s railway industry from the dangers and unsavoury attractions of the city’s streets and to provide them with alternative, worthy activities. The Railway Mission, along with many similar organisations, enjoyed initial growth and found itself competing for support, both practical and financial, to enable it to maintain its position within the evangelical, philanthropic world and to enable it to progress with its aim of continued expansion. The Mission’s founding and executive committees were composed of a network of male, middle and upper-class religious

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<sup>1</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November, 1888.

philanthropists while much of the initial organisation at local level was undertaken by those railwaymen who were already practising Christians. As membership of the Railway Mission grew, so did the need for more workers to organise and work in its expanding branch network and the Mission began to recruit growing numbers of women to help it to meet its ambitious programme of expansion. The Mission laid out its idealised requirements for its 'lady friends' in the descriptive article about Miss Go-Ahead in an effort to encourage those women whom it considered to be suitable to help the organisation at a time when it was enjoying significant growth.

This Introduction will discuss the aims and scope of thesis and then provide a critical overview of the historiography on nineteenth-century class and gender relations, the culture of Victorian religious work and the development of the railway network. It will then proceed to clarify the original contribution of this research, to describe the methodology and sources for the thesis and, finally, to outline the content of the following chapters.

### **Aims and Scope of this Thesis**

This research focuses on women's work in the Railway Mission in late-nineteenth century England and its aim is to offer new perspectives on women's involvement in religious and philanthropic work. The research will provide a new dimension to existing debates around the intersections of class and gender in Victorian religious culture through its examination of women's missionary work with Victorian railwaymen. The exploration of a previously neglected set of primary sources which throw light upon polarised gendered cultures will also give additional insights into the social constructions of feminine and masculine identities during a period of social and political change. The thesis will provide an in-depth study of a neglected aspect of Victorian women's philanthropic and missionary work which highlights the important roles played by women in missions directed at men working within an exclusively male environment and it will explore the opportunities for women's agency in male-dominated spaces during an era when the ideology of separate spheres remained powerful.

In terms of geographical scope, this thesis will concentrate on the Railway Mission's activities in England although, during the period under review, the Mission was also active in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and in parts of the Empire. This research combines Railway Mission records with census and genealogical data. Currently, comprehensive records exist only for England thus limiting the scope of research at the present time although it may be possible to undertake more expansive research in the future. In chronological terms, the thesis will undertake a study of women's work in the Railway Mission from its foundation in 1881 through to 1901. This twenty-year period was one of significant growth and development for the Railway Mission and also one during which it relied heavily on women as volunteers in many aspects of its work. It is therefore a useful period for detailed exploration of the ways in which women worked for, and were portrayed by, the Mission as it sought to establish itself as a viable and creditable religious organisation.

This was also a period of economic, social and political change as improved education for both middle and working-class women led to increased occupational opportunities and significant numbers of women sought paid employment especially in the emerging service and commercial sectors of the late-nineteenth century. In addition, women had become interested in political reform following the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884/5, which extended the franchise for large numbers of men and many women began to become active in early suffrage initiatives.

Women also began to seek an escape from the confines of domesticity and the notion of the 'New Woman,' who worked and lived independently and moved about freely and unchaperoned in the public world, began to emerge. As Sutherland notes: 'New opportunities to make a living without dependence on parents or husband brought women some choice, some additional freedom.'<sup>2</sup> This was not a sudden change, rather it reflected, as Sutherland suggests, 'a steadily, swelling debate about the position of women of the middle-classes'<sup>3</sup> which was 'slowly and painfully getting underway.'<sup>4</sup> It was not without controversy because, as Tosh notes, the 'New Woman' 'provoked because she refused to lead her life by the patriarchal rules' and

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<sup>2</sup> G Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.161.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p.14.

‘the new freedoms’ which she claimed ‘threatened traditional notions of inequality in the private sphere.’<sup>5</sup>

During the same period, the Railway Mission needed increasingly more women to support its growing branch network; they sought to recruit not ‘New Women’ but women of quiet, spiritual and religious belief as exemplified by the fictional Miss Go-Ahead. This idealised recruit was not meant to challenge the traditional norms of patriarchy or the traditional constructions of gender and the thesis will explore the ways in which the Railway Mission sought to reconcile this idealised notion of its ‘lady helpers’ with the social, economic and political changes of the late-nineteenth century. The thesis will assess how far these women, a committed and largely voluntary workforce, matched up to the ideals portrayed by the Railway Mission in its description of the fictional Miss Go-Ahead and it will examine the ways in which the Mission viewed and represented its female missionaries in the rhetoric of its publications.

Chronologically, this twenty-year period between 1881 and 1901 was a significant period for the Railway Mission: it was a period of celebration as the number of members grew but also one of struggle as it tried to maintain its growth and position amidst the plethora of similar evangelical initiatives of the time, facing the constant need for greater financial resources than it was able to attract. Women’s voluntary labour was therefore of vital importance to the Mission as it concentrated its efforts on the evangelisation of railwaymen. In the early twentieth century, the Mission’s focus shifted: fewer women were available or willing to work purely on a voluntary basis and, in an era of fierce competition for religious allegiance, the Mission opened up its doors to act more as a local church which welcomed all rather than providing religion exclusively for railwaymen. Although railwaymen remained the main focus, the Mission expanded to provide Sunday Schools, Women’s Meetings and a number of other activities. Change has continued: the Railway Mission is still in existence but it no longer has a branch network and operates entirely on a chaplaincy basis to the railway industry, available to railway employees and to the general travelling public.

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<sup>5</sup>J Tosh, *A Man’s Place. Masculinity and the Middle Class Home in Victorian England*. (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.152.

Focusing on the 1881-1901 period, this study will consider how women sought to create religious provision aimed specifically at railwaymen. It will explore how the Mission coped with, and reacted to, tensions between the traditional constructs of religious femininity and the new opportunities for women which emerged over this period and it will examine the relationships between the railway and religious cultures of the late-nineteenth century. It will consider the reasons why women became involved in Railway Mission work and the ways in which they worked to create space in this male-dominated and male-controlled environment. The research will contribute a fresh perspective to the ongoing debate surrounding the concept of separate spheres by exploring a group of women who moved into the very masculine environment of the Victorian railway industry. It will consider the ways in which women managed to cross, yet simultaneously maintain, both class and gender divisions and will add a new dimension to the existing body of research into women's philanthropic and religious work with women through its focus on their work with working-class men. While previous research has shown how women's involvement in philanthropic and charitable work increased during the latter part of the nineteenth century, it has suggested that their work was predominantly with working-class women and children and, in the case of foreign mission work, that women were specifically selected to work with indigenous women where access to women was forbidden to male missionaries. Highlighting women's mission within a male-dominated culture will add a new cogency and an additional dimension to the discussion.

Existing research into the social construction of gender, the history of religion, particularly evangelism and the history of railway development will be a useful start to this study of women's involvement in Railway Mission work and these three areas of historiography will be considered in the following sections of this Introduction.

## **Historiography and Conceptual Framework**

This section will firstly consider previous research into women's roles in Victorian Britain and, in particular, theories surrounding the social construction of gender. It

will then discuss aspects of the debate about religion and the popularity of the evangelical movement in the late-Victorian period with specific reference to the roles which were assigned to women and, finally, will review research into the culture of Victorian railway development and employment. This historiographical overview is intended to give a broad brush picture of these aspects of Victorian culture. Chapter 1 will engage more closely with the key areas of debate in these areas of historiography in relation to the last two decades of the nineteenth century when women became active in the Mission.

## **1. Gender and Class in Victorian Britain**

Since the 1980s, a vast amount of work has been undertaken in the field of women's and gender history in the Victorian period. As this section will show, since the 1980s, there has been a shift in the debate with the suggestion that women were more active outside of the domestic sphere than was previously suggested. Of particular relevance to this thesis are the recent suggestions that religious belief and practice gave women a socially and culturally acceptable way of moving out from the confines of the home to gain a role in the external religious and social world of Victorian Britain.<sup>6</sup> This section will pay close attention to the debates surrounding the issues of public and private spheres. Although much of the historiography focuses on the earlier nineteenth century, these debates are particularly relevant to this study of women's work for the Railway Mission because of the pervasive strength of the ideologies which remained influential during the period under review. As Sutherland notes, although opportunities for middle-class women were beginning to increase during the late-nineteenth century, 'much else in these women's worlds was not: social attitudes and conventions in particular moved with different rhythms and each woman had to make her own decisions and choices in trying to navigate them.'<sup>7</sup>

Ideas about differing roles for men and women developed during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries. Many of these ideas coincided with the changes brought about by industrialisation and urbanisation. In pre-industrial society, the

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<sup>6</sup> See, for example, E Gordon and G Nair, *Public Lives. Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), C Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>7</sup> G Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman*, p.164.

household was often the unit of production with both women and men playing active roles in the productive process. Technological changes and the centralisation of production in the developing mills and factories often led to the separation of home and work making it difficult for women to combine productive work with domestic and childcare responsibilities. The patriarchal nature of pre-industrial society had given women responsibility for the household and children and, whilst the household was the unit of production, the combination of both productive and reproductive work could be undertaken by women more easily than in the separate locations which became increasingly prevalent during the industrial process.<sup>8</sup> This development also saw a significant shift in the population from a primarily rural base to a concentration of people in the growing urban areas. Change was not uniform; the impact of industrialisation was felt more quickly and more keenly in some areas, notably the cotton areas of Lancashire and the woollen towns of Yorkshire. However, by mid-century, Britain had begun to change from a rural society to one which was predominantly urban and industrial: the 1851 census showed, for the first time, a small majority of urban dwellers and the trend continued throughout the century.<sup>9</sup>

Historians have viewed these changes in number of ways. Marxist historians have seen class as the defining factor of both social organisation and identity<sup>10</sup> whilst feminist historical researchers introduced gender as a key analytical category and highlighted the mutual constitution of class and gender identities. This section will concentrate on the ways in which gender has been used as an analytical tool with which to understand women's position in the social, economic and cultural changes of the Victorian period.

In their highly influential book, *Family Fortunes*, Davidoff and Hall worked from the basic premise that identity was gendered and that gender difference was central to the social world.<sup>11</sup> In their comprehensive study, they examine the middle-class struggle for identity during a period of industrialisation, political unrest and economic change and suggest that masculine identity came to be linked to the public world of

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<sup>8</sup> E Whitelegg & V Beechey, *The Changing Experience of Women*, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982).

<sup>9</sup> H McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, (London: St Martin's Press, 1996).

<sup>10</sup> See, for example, KS Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*, (Toronto: Routledge, 1963).

<sup>11</sup> L Davidoff and C Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English middle-class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2005), first published 1985.

work whilst female identity was linked with the home. Davidoff and Hall's work paved the way for further research based on the concept of separate spheres and provided a theoretical framework for analysing women's place in different social, cultural and economic experiences by gender.

From the early 1990s, the validity of the separate spheres framework began to be questioned, initially, by Vickery in her paper *Golden Age to Separate Spheres*.<sup>12</sup> She notes that the concept of separate spheres has come to constitute 'one of the fundamental organizing categories of modern British women's history' and how, through the framework, feminist historians linked 'the cult of womanhood to a shrinkage of political, professional and business opportunities for women in the years 1800-1840'<sup>13</sup> which accompanied the process of industrialisation. She criticises the framework for presenting women as passive victims and argues that the evidence for its validity was derived from the literature of nineteenth-century advice books, magazines and evangelical sermons, suggesting that this represented a prescriptive, rather than a descriptive, reality of women's lives. New historical research suggests, on the contrary, that women were capable agents, rather than passive victims shaping their own lives within the male-dominated culture of nineteenth century Britain. She points to examples of middle-class women actively taking control of their households and managing their servants and of women as 'intrepid immigrants, formidable travellers and driven philanthropists.'<sup>14</sup> She suggests that the strength of the domestic ideology acted as a catalyst for resistance and that women reacted against the 'stultifying containment' of the separate spheres ideology.<sup>15</sup> This thesis will throw further light on the mismatch between rhetoric and experience. It will examine Railway Mission rhetoric which similarly provided a prescriptive idealised stereotype of its 'lady friends.' It will also, however, explore the varied ways in which these women worked for the Mission and will suggest that women showed commitment, initiative, innovation and management abilities. The thesis will suggest that, although these attributes and skills may have been couched within evangelical

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<sup>12</sup> A Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres? A Review of the Categories and Chronology of English Women's History' *The Historical Journal*, Vol 36 No 2 (1993) pp. 383-414.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.384.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.389.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.392.

practice and belief, this did not diminish the very real efforts which these women made or the success which they achieved.

Vickery challenges Davidoff and Hall's argument that gender played a crucial role in the structuring of a specifically middle-class culture, contesting their claim that the middle class was bound together by a distinctive culture. Vickery suggests that Davidoff and Hall did not consider the extent to which middle-class values were shared with the gentry and urban artisans and she uses her own research of north-east Lancashire during the years 1750-1825 to show that there was much more common ground between the gentry and the middle classes than Davidoff and Hall suggest. In *The Gentleman's Daughter*, she suggests that women did have networks outside of the home and that the women in her study 'presented themselves to the world in the mantle of politeness. Politeness was a tool which a well-born woman could use to extend her reach.'<sup>16</sup> 'A polite lady,' she suggests, 'laid claim to wider cultural horizons through reading and exchanging periodicals, pamphlets, papers and novels, through letters and through cultural consumption.'<sup>17</sup> The thesis will take this concept of female networks and will examine the extent to which middle-class women in the late-nineteenth century used religion as a means of satisfying personal belief and commitment and also as a link with which to create social networks with like-minded women which took them outside of the home.

Vickery also questions Davidoff and Hall's chronology for the development of separate spheres. She notes that this concept of the sexual division of labour pre-dates the nineteenth century and could indeed probably be applied to any culture or any century. She also questions whether the sexual division of labour amounts to the same thing as separate spheres for men and women. The metaphor of separate spheres, she claims, 'fails to capture the texture of female subordination and the complex interplay of emotion and power in family life.'<sup>18</sup> Whilst she acknowledges that the notion of separate spheres has been useful in the historical consideration of the significance of gender, she concludes that it cannot be linked solely to the

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<sup>16</sup> A Vickery, *The Gentleman's Daughter, Women's Lives in Georgian England*, (London: Yale University Press, 2003), p.9.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.9.

<sup>18</sup> Vickery, 'Golden Age to Separate Spheres?' p.401.

nineteenth century nor can it be held to be entirely responsible for the emergence of nineteenth-century, middle-class culture.

In *Public Lives*, Gordon and Nair similarly suggest that the concept of separate spheres was derived from prescriptive nineteenth-century literature and they are critical of the gender binaries associated with public and private.<sup>19</sup> They seek to challenge the dichotomy of separate spheres and show that it was not the dominant discourse through 'a complex analysis of letters, diaries and wills.'<sup>20</sup> They argue that the middle-class values of self-reliance, independence and progress were important to both men and women and they suggest that, although women worked towards these goals in structures and organizations which were gender specific, both sexes shared the same ideological values. They also dispute the concept of the private home and suggest that the ideologies of the household were inseparable from those of wider social and economic life: women's participation in the wider social world was, they suggest, an extension of the middle-class values shared by women and men. Middle-class values did not, they argue, imprison women within the home but promoted a public role for women as a key feature of class identity. They suggest that the conventional view of the public sphere as one which was not inhabited by women should be revised; women were, they claim, prominent actors in the transmission of middle-class values and they were key to the emergence and development of a public philanthropic sphere even though they were absent from the world of public office holding. Gordon and Nair's claim that middle-class values were shared by men and women provides a useful framework with which to consider the ways in which men and women worked together in the Railway Mission. The thesis will further develop existing research which has examined women's work in organizations specifically for women to show that women were also effective in the Railway Mission which aimed to work with, and for, the thousands of men employed in the Victorian railway industry.

Recent scholarship has shed further light on the dichotomized views of public and private spheres through, as Gleadle notes, 'much more sophisticated understandings

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<sup>19</sup> E Gordon and G Nair, *Public Lives: Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain*.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid*, p.13

of the blurrings and interdependence of these two notions.<sup>21</sup> Her detailed study explores the variety of ways in which women became involved in political activity during the early-nineteenth century. She suggests that, although women's activism may have taken a different form from that of men, they maintained an influential presence in many areas of social and political activity. She considers the influence which women could have in the 'parochial realm' where they could exert authority through social standing, family connections, philanthropy, wealth and education. She also points to women's involvement in the wider arena in, for example, Anti-Corn Law, pacifist and temperance movements and in anti-slavery campaigns. She considers the home as an important site of women's involvement in social and political affairs. Here, she suggests, women exerted influence upon their husbands and promoted political discussion, thus providing their children with an understanding of the political debates of the day. In addition, she suggests, women held social gatherings, often with a political agenda, in the home. Midgley's detailed study of the anti-slavery movement, for example, shows how women held tea parties at which they boycotted the use slave-grown sugar as a home-based, political statement.<sup>22</sup>

Gleadle describes women in the early-nineteenth century as 'borderline citizens.' Their status as political agents, she suggests, was not secure but dependent upon changing circumstances which could promote, subvert or challenge their activities. Despite the limitations which the gendered, ideological culture of the period could impose upon women, Gleadle's research confirms the widespread nature of women's interest and participation in political activism. Although this activism may not have always been carried out in the public sphere, there is sufficient evidence, she suggests, to show significant flexibility between the binary positions of public and private as women moved between the home, the local community and the national arena in their various forms of political activity.

Richardson also challenges the dichotomized nature of the separate spheres debate. 'The notion of public and private,' she suggests, 'should be understood as ideological constructs utilised in different ways for particular purposes, rather than fixed,

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<sup>21</sup> K. Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens. Women, Gender and Political Change in Britain 1815-1867*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p. 17.

<sup>22</sup> C. Midgley, *Women Against Slavery. The British Campaigns 1789-1870*, (London: Routledge, 1992).

unchanging entities.’<sup>23</sup> She argues that women took on a number of identities during the course of their lives, enabling them to participate in politics at a number of levels and in a variety of locations. Like Gleadle, Richardson highlights the home as a significant site of women’s activism. The social rituals of visiting, tea parties, reading and letter writing, she suggests, alerted women to political issues and she considers the written form to be one of the main strategies which women used to engage with political and social issues. From the home, she notes, women wrote pamphlets, newspaper and journal articles, religious tracts and novels and, as she suggests, ‘Far from being confined to domestic oblivion, women used their homes and hearths as arenas for their active participation in public life.’<sup>24</sup> The local community was also important. Richardson notes the ways in which women worked in informal networks designed to take up local causes such as poverty, religious philanthropy, the welfare of the elderly and the education of the young and how, at a national level, they grouped together in female associations, raising petitions to express their concerns about political and social issues. Such petitions, she suggests, enabled women who did not have an electoral voice to challenge Parliament and other statutory bodies on a range of issues such as Poor Law reform, the Corn Laws, slavery and sati, the practice of widow burning. Through the strategies of collaborative networks, associations and petitioning, women were able to work with like-minded women and to combine intellectual debate and action with practical work at a local level. Richardson’s exploration of the multi-faceted ways in which women engaged with a range of political issues clearly illustrates the significant extent of their involvement in social and political activism and, although she considers the home to be a primarily female location, she suggests that it was also a site of activism for women, noting that, although the public and private spheres were gendered spaces, they were not fixed but ‘flexible with multiple manifestations.’<sup>25</sup>

There have therefore been significant developments in the historiographical debates about the public and private spheres and the ideologies which informed perceptions of women’s special roles within the home. Despite new evidence of the many ways in which women engaged in political activism, there is consensus about the extent to

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<sup>23</sup> S. Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women. Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p.43.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, p. 38

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid*, p. 191.

which women retained a religious persona. Indeed, Gleadle suggests that ‘women’s religious identities were central to their involvement in political change.’<sup>26</sup> The continuing influence of religion is important to this thesis which focuses upon the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a period of economic and social change during which significant numbers of women became involved in many forms of activity outside of the home. The thesis will explore the ways in which their deep religious beliefs led women to become involved in Railway Mission work. It will also consider the extent to which the pervasive ideologies about the strength of women’s spirituality gave them influence and authority in their work with working-class railwaymen. The thesis will thus add to the on-going debate about the flexibility and permeability of women’s activism through its exploration of the ways in which Mission women moved between the sanctity of the home and the masculine spaces of the Victorian railway environment.

A discussion of women, gender and class in Victorian Britain cannot consider women in isolation but should also discuss the position of men because, as Begatio suggests, ‘the history of masculinity and of masculine identities and constructions’ is essential to an understanding of gender.<sup>27</sup> Tosh similarly argues that it is important to explore the ‘structure of gender relations, rather than the experience of one sex.’<sup>28</sup> The social construction of masculinity and perceptions of manliness are relevant to this thesis for both working and middle-class men. For middle-class men, the home was generally considered to be the place of nurture, the escape from the public world of work but, equally, it could be a place where, as Tosh puts it, ‘men have usually wielded authority because it has been necessary to their self- respect to do so.’<sup>29</sup> Some women in the Railway Mission worked as part of a family unit as a wife, a sister or daughter and the thesis will examine the extent to which their male family members may have influenced their attitudes towards, and behaviour within, the Mission. The Railway Mission was controlled by a hierarchical group of wealthy upper and middle-class men and patriarchy was integral to its practice and rhetoric. The thesis will consider the extent to which patriarchal constructions of masculinity

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<sup>26</sup> K. Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens*, p. 26.

<sup>27</sup> J. Begatio, ‘Moustaches, Mollies and Muscularity: Teaching the History of Masculinity’ in *Women’s History* 3 (2015), p.8.

<sup>28</sup> J. Tosh, *A Man’s Place: Masculinity and the Middle-Class Home in Victorian England*, p.2.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

pervaded Mission rhetoric and how far women working in the Mission were able to develop strategies which gave them the authority and influence to create independent roles for themselves within the Mission world.

An understanding of working-class masculinity is also fundamental to this thesis. Central to the notion of respectable Victorian working-class masculinity was the male role of 'breadwinner' and, as in constructions of middle-class masculinities, the position of authority in the home. Working-class masculinity in the late-nineteenth century also came to rely on the possession of manual skill and physical strength. Tosh describes 'the aggressive celebration of physical strength as an exclusive badge of masculinity'<sup>30</sup> and Heathorn agrees: prior to World War 1, working-class masculinity was, he suggests, 'tied to respectable employment and physical labour.'<sup>31</sup> Working-class labour, strength and manliness was celebrated in Victorian popular culture. Ford Madox Brown's well-known painting, *Work*, for example, shows the idealised portrayal of navvies digging; they are clean, look respectable and are watched by middle-class ladies and gentlemen. Surrounding the canvas are religious quotes and the message is clear. Christianity and masculine strength combine to exemplify the social and moral positivity of heavy, physical work. Similarly, William Bell Scott's painting, *Iron and Coal*, portrays respectable working men beside a large furnace and the canvas also bears a religious message. The painting is set in the city of Newcastle upon Tyne, famous for its Victorian culture of heavy industry. It depicts the High Level Railway Bridge and the ships on the River Tyne which combine with the portrayal of working-class muscular strength to promote the success of physical strength and industrial modernity.

Masculine strength is particularly relevant to the culture of Victorian railway employment, where physical strength and endurance were essential to the harsh working conditions which the men experienced and working-class male identity was inherent within, and endorsed by, the masculine exclusivity of Victorian railway employment. The thesis will examine perceptions of women's physical weakness and muscular railway masculinity in Railway Mission rhetoric to see how far these

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<sup>30</sup> J. Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity. Reflections on Nineteenth Century Britain' in *History Workshop Journal* Issue 38 (1994), p.186.

<sup>31</sup> S.Heathorn, 'How Stiff Were Their Upper Lips? Research on late Victorian and Edwardian Masculinity' in *History Compass* Vol. 2 Issue 1 (2004), p.2.

binary positions were used to facilitate complementary working relationships between the women and the men whom they hoped to convert. It will also consider the extent to which the concept of male physical prowess, the core of the social construction of working-class masculinity, was subverted by perceptions of women's spiritual strength and men's moral weakness.

## **2. Evangelical Religion in Victorian Britain**

Despite the differences of opinion among historians as to the extent of the dichotomized nature of 'separate spheres,' the strength of women's religious beliefs is a common theme in this literature. There has been a huge amount of research into the history of religion and it is beyond the scope of this introductory overview to cover its historiography in detail. The area of most relevance to the study of women's work with the Railway Mission relates to the role and position of women within the religious and philanthropic world of late-Victorian Britain. The debate about working-class religious affiliation cannot, however, be overlooked. Traditional research has suggested that the Victorian middle class showed much higher levels of religious observance and affiliation than the working class. McLeod, for example, argues that the Victorian church failed to attract working-class support because of its failure to adapt to the social and economic changes of industrialisation and urbanisation<sup>32</sup> while Inglis uses a Marxist analytical framework to suggest that class differential arising from the development of capitalism led to working-class alienation from middle-class society as well as from organised religion.<sup>33</sup> Bebbington also points to class divides in his study of evangelicalism in nineteenth-century Britain. His detailed study charts the development of evangelicalism from the early eighteenth century and describes how, by the time of the period under review, the most common forms of evangelical activities included regular Sunday services, weekly prayer meetings often held in the evenings, Bible classes, women's meetings, children's classes and the key practice of home visiting.<sup>34</sup> These were all activities which the Railway Mission adopted. If the people failed to attend regular services, as Bebbington argues was frequently the case amongst Victorian working-

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<sup>32</sup> H McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*.

<sup>33</sup> KS Inglis, *Churches and the Working Classes in Victorian England*.

<sup>34</sup> DW Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain. A History from the 1730s to the 1980s* (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 2003).

class communities, evangelicals went to the people. 'Voluntary visitors, most of them women, would call on perhaps twenty families at frequent intervals, always delivering tracts, encouraging attendance at worship and reporting cases of need to the minister.'<sup>35</sup> As Bebbington notes, the technique ensured that there was a point of contact between the church and non-attenders. One of the main aims of the Railway Mission was to take religion to the railwaymen of Victorian Britain with a particular focus of visiting the men's homes and using railway and outdoor space to hold evening and weekday services for the men who were unable to attend regular Sunday services because of railway working shift patterns. Whilst the class divisions noted by Inglis and Bebbington were clearly visible in Railway Mission structure and organisation, the thesis will explore the extent to which there were also occasions of class cooperation and collaboration between Mission workers and railwaymen rather than the model of constant class conflict adopted by Marxist historians.

More recent research has suggested that previous work has used an inappropriate framework with which to measure working-class religiosity because of its focus on numerical surveys of attendance with claims that working-class religiosity was expressed in ways other than formal church attendance.<sup>36</sup> The issue of working-class religiosity is important to any study of the Railway Mission since, as already discussed, the Mission was established with the specific purpose of increasing the religious practice and observance of the vast numbers of railwaymen in late-Victorian Britain.

As the thesis will focus on the roles which primarily middle-class women played in the attempts made by the Mission to achieve these objectives, it is important to consider previous research into women's evangelical work in the late-nineteenth century. Brown sees women as having a central role in religion in his examination of evangelicalism in Victorian Britain and, in his book, *The Death of Christian Britain*, he claims that the evangelical movement enjoyed such rapid and extensive growth because of the social and cultural environment in which it developed.

Industrialisation and urbanisation, he suggests, led to increasing concern about

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<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.

<sup>36</sup> See, for example, C Brown, *Religion and Society in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Britain* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd., 2006) and M Turkstra, 'Working Class Families in Early Twentieth Century Hamilton', *Social History*, Vol. 41 No. 28, (2008).

working-class behaviour and the evangelical message contained the moral and social values with which, it was thought, working-class culture should be imbued. Evangelical religion became the 'enforcer of domestic ideology' in which women played the fundamental role, and he describes the interaction between culture and religion by showing how evangelicalism also provided 'the community location for the elaboration and affirmation of separate spheres as domestic ideology.'<sup>37</sup> He describes individual involvement with charitable and religious organisations through the giving of donations and through more practical work with, and support for, the many organisations which emerged as part of the evangelical initiative. Religion, he argues, was fundamental in enabling middle-class women to develop 'identity and moral agency over their own destinies' and to create a space in 'religious, temperance and philanthropic organisations within which they cultivated a worldly role.'<sup>38</sup> As already noted, however, female religious practice and belief was not an exclusively middle-class affair and the thesis will explore the extent to which, in the Railway Mission, working-class women, particularly the wives of railwaymen, could also share Brown's notion of a special religious role with their middle-class counterparts. Brown also considers the ways in which the social constructions of gender, both feminine and masculine, became interwoven into notions of religious allegiance and respectability and he suggests that these ideals were reflected in both religious and secular narratives, particularly during the period under review.<sup>39</sup>

Eason also uses a gendered analytical framework in his study of gender and equality issues in the Salvation Army.<sup>40</sup> The Salvation Army, a major evangelical initiative which developed alongside the Railway Mission, used a large number of women in its operational methods. The organisation had a reputation for gender equality from the date of its inception, which, as Eason comments, was remarkable in late-nineteenth-century Britain, a period during which women were considered to be better suited for the domestic sphere of the home than for the public domain. However, Eason argues that, in reality, the restrictions which society placed on women were replicated in the Salvation Army. He argues that evangelical belief both

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<sup>37</sup> C Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p.42.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid*, p.52.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid*, p.58.

<sup>40</sup> A Eason, *Women in God's Army. Gender and Equality in the Early Salvation Army*, (Ontario: Wilfred Laurier University Press, 2003).

endorsed and compounded the separate spheres framework for many women. Two basic theological tenets, he suggests, supported women's subordination. Firstly, evangelicals believed in conversion and the practical action which needed to be taken to prevent sin and to prepare people for death; salvation could not be given by God alone, evangelicals were therefore required to work to save others from sin. Secondly, evangelical belief also 'centred on the sacrificial death of Christ on the cross.'<sup>41</sup> Suffering, self-sacrifice and the care of others were themes, he suggests, which gave women a position within the Salvation Army which did not challenge notions of respectability and which coincided with the wider perceptions of women's roles of moral and spiritual guardians of the home. Religious belief and a Christ-like selfless love, he argues, supported women's conventional identification with self-denial. These beliefs also gave weight to the assumption that women were more religious than men although, as he notes, despite a belief in women's greater religiosity and spirituality, they did not enjoy positions of power in the religious world. Theological theory and contemporaneous socially-constructed and gendered assumptions, he argues, coincided to confirm women's moral and spiritual superiority whilst their position in the Salvation Army, in wider religious culture and in respectable Victorian society, remained subordinate.

Walker takes a more positive view of women's involvement in the Salvation Army and claims that the organisation offered more opportunity than Eason suggests was the case: 'Work in the Army offered new professional opportunities to thousands of women and the Army was widely recognised as an innovator in women's employment.'<sup>42</sup> She also sees the Salvation Army as providing women with positions of authority which they did not experience elsewhere: 'Amongst the most significant and ground breaking features of the Salvation Army was the unusual prominence given to women.'<sup>43</sup> This thesis will consider whether, although Eason's view of the binary positions between men and women may have been reflected in Railway Mission rhetoric and structure, some elements of women's work for the Railway Mission may, as Walker found, suggest a different picture. The thesis will explore the extent to which the socially constructed ideology which endowed women with

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<sup>41</sup> *Ibid*, p.28.

<sup>42</sup> P.J. Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down. The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain*, (London: University of California Press, 2001), pp.6-7.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

greater spirituality gave some women in the Railway Mission more power and influence than Eason suggests was the case in the Salvation Army.

Religious belief and social convention also influenced women's experience of foreign missionary work which, during the period under review, offered increasing opportunities to women. Kirkwood, Williams and Semple all describe the new opportunities which overseas mission work offered to women in enabling them to move out of the domestic sphere to a role which offered excitement as well as the opportunity to travel.<sup>44</sup> Williams suggests that missionary work offered a role in a society in which there were very few roles 'in any accredited professional sense' available to women and he linked this increased opportunity to educational change during the latter part of the nineteenth century.<sup>45</sup> He points also to social change as women became more involved in religious work as fund raisers, Bible women and philanthropists and the thesis will show that these were just some of the areas of work in which women in the Railway Mission became involved.

The late-Victorian period is one of particular interest in the consideration of women's religious and philanthropic activities. Schwarz refers to the ways in which religious belief affected all aspects of life for many women and she also makes connections between religion and women's interest in political reform during the late-nineteenth century.<sup>46</sup> This connection is also highlighted by Summers, Mumm and Midgley<sup>47</sup>. Gleadle points to changes in education in the late-nineteenth century as opening up opportunities for middle-class women in particular but she also shows the ways in which existing perceptions of gender difference persisted so that many women continued to be involved in traditional roles.<sup>48</sup> Although middle-class ideologies about women's role in the home were pervasive and powerful, women showed

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<sup>44</sup> D Kirkwood, 'Protestant Missionary Women' and P Williams, 'The Recruitment of Women Missionaries' in F Bowie, D Kirkwood and S Ardener, *Women and Missions: Past and Present* (Oxford: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 1993), p.32, RA Semple, *Missionary Women. Gender, Profession and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003).

<sup>45</sup> P Williams, 'The Recruitment of Women Missionaries' in Bowie, Kirkwood and Ardener, *Women and Missions*, p. 44.

<sup>46</sup> Schwarz L, 'Women, Religion and Agency in Modern British History' *Women's History Review*, 21:2, (2012), p.317-323.

<sup>47</sup> A Summers, *Female Lives, Moral States. Women, Religion and Public Life in Britain 1800-1930*, (Newbury, Berks: Threshold Press, 2000), Mumm S, 'Women and Philanthropic Cultures' and Midgley C, 'Women, Religion and Reform' in Morgan S and de Vries J, *Women. Gender and Religious Cultures 1800-1940*.

<sup>48</sup> K Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*. (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.139.

determination in their efforts to push against these conventions. As Yeo writes: 'Despite the powerful pressures holding them in the home, women continually contested the boundary between private and public spheres.' Evangelical women, she suggests, felt that they had an important role in dealing with the poor but notes that, 'they could only move into public work by transposing to it their role from the family and home.'<sup>49</sup> This research will explore the extent to which these cultural positions impacted upon women whose focus was on the evangelical conversion of working-class men.

Semple argues that gendered notions about women's roles influenced the recruitment of female overseas mission workers and led to the creation of a specific mission rhetoric in which women's work became to be seen as with, and for, other women.<sup>50</sup> She claims that previous study into women's mission work has been superficial because of its overriding concern with records showing women's entry into mission work and the chronological development of their activities.<sup>51</sup> More attention should be paid, she suggests, to their motivation and to the complicated interaction between their private and professional lives. In her study of women's foreign mission work, Semple attempts to address this imbalance by a detailed exploration of the language used to describe, and chart the development of, women's mission work and she suggests that language can be used as an analytical tool with which to understand the realities of women's lives. This thesis will extend Semple's approach by analysing the use of language in Railway Mission publications to gain an understanding of why, and how, women undertook work for the Mission. The thesis will also show how written space was crucial to the Mission. Women used correspondence as a means of reaching railwaymen while the literary space of Mission publications used fictional and religious writing, especially in the *Railway Signal*, as a fundamental means of promoting its religious and cultural identity.

McDowell links space to the social construction of gender: 'Women and men experience spaces and places differently - - these differences themselves are part of

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<sup>49</sup> E Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science. Relations and Representations of Gender and Class*, (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996), p.10.

<sup>50</sup> R A Semple, *Missionary Women. Gender, Profession and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission*.

<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p.3.

the social construction of gender as well as that of place.<sup>52</sup> She introduces the historical context of the Victorian city, of particular interest to this thesis, which, she explains, 'created a place where women might escape from the confines of domesticity and male/presence control even if only for short and temporary periods.'<sup>53</sup> She also points to 'a sense of complex relationships between gender, sexuality and space' which she claims 'are more complicated than a simple binary division between the public and the private' but are imbued with 'complex and paradoxical associations between gender and locale, identity and particular places for men as well as for women.'<sup>54</sup> An understanding of the impact of technological change and the differing forms of physical space which were created by the Victorian railway industry is important in the exploration of the new spaces into which women in the Railway Mission moved and worked. This thesis will explore the gendered locations of railway space in its discussions of women's work in the Railway Mission.

This thesis will use the theoretical framework of space in its widest sense. It will incorporate definitions and explanations which link physical space with social and gendered activities and it will also extend the notion to cover other forms of space. Darling and Whitworth's study of women and space is particularly useful for this approach. They consider explanations of the relationships between women and physical space to be limited and suggest that a much more fruitful and awarding approach is to consider space in a much wider context which incorporates 'buildings and artefacts' but also 'texts, speeches or living practices, *inter alia*.'<sup>55</sup> They also consider the use of biographical sources in a spatial context and suggest that biographical sources 'allow better understandings of where women's practice is actually located' but they also note this to be a source which tends to single out the exceptional individual rather than the 'anonymous and, to some extent, unknowable women.'<sup>56</sup> This thesis will explore the work of the Railway Mission's 'lady friends' who would otherwise remain unknown: it will use the theoretical framework of space in its widest sense to include those women who, in their work with the Railway

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<sup>52</sup> L. McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place. Understanding Feminist Geographies*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1999), p.12.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, p.149.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, p.168.

<sup>55</sup> E Darling and L Whitworth, *Women and the Making of Built Space in England 1870-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2007), p.4.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid*, p.2.

Mission, may have been considered to be exceptional and, through the adoption of Whitworth and Darling's very broad theoretical concept of space, it will also examine the work of the many other women involved in perhaps more routine aspects of Mission work. This approach will ensure that the thesis gives full consideration to what Darling and Whitworth consider as 'the whole range of actors as potential makers of space.'<sup>57</sup> This use of space will provide a theoretical and analytical tool which will embrace and explore the similarities and divisions between late-nineteenth century religious and railway cultures in a new and innovative manner and will facilitate a clear and contextual understanding of the ways in which women were able to create and occupy space in the male-dominated sanctum of the Victorian railway industry.

Ross also uses concepts of space in her recent study which concentrates on home mission work and she notes an analogy between mission work in the slum areas of London and that carried out overseas, claiming that working in slum areas was as exotic and unknown to many middle-class women as foreign mission work.<sup>58</sup> Women's travel to, and work in, slum areas was comparable, Ross suggests, to the foreign travel of their brothers. The analogy of travel which Ross uses in relation to mission work will be extended in this study of women's work with the Railway Mission. The thesis will show how women undertook physical travel as part of their work for the Railway Mission and also how their involvement with the Mission led to metaphorical travel to, and between, the gendered and cultural spatial divisions of railway and religious cultures. It will explore the possibility that women in the Railway Mission were, in many ways, involved in making more testing journeys than the middle-class women who were the focus of Ross's research. Middle-class women in the Railway Mission had to cross not only the class divisions which Ross found in her study of middle-class women working with working-class women in slum areas but also had to make the arguably more difficult social and gendered journey into the male-dominated culture of railway stations, mess rooms and workshops. Ross, in a similar way to Semple, applies social constructionist theory to religious belief and argues that the deep religious belief which was important in attracting

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<sup>57</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

<sup>58</sup> E Ross, *Slum Travelers. Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920* (London: University of California Press, 2007).

middle-class women to slum work also gave them the opportunity to have some freedom from the 'excruciating boredom of social convention and protocol'<sup>59</sup> but she questions Eason's view of women's self-denial and Christ-like suffering and claims that her findings provide an insight which looks beyond 'sentimentalised images of female selflessness, satirical lady bountiful stereotypes or social control implications.'<sup>60</sup> Her accounts, she argues, give a useful glimpse into women's involvement in, and attraction to, philanthropic work which may have been religiously inspired but which also allowed them to extend their horizons and experience in what she terms as 'bold travel in urban spaces.'<sup>61</sup> The thesis will also consider whether women working for the Railway Mission, can also be considered as undertaking 'bold travel,' not only in the public urban space described by Ross, but also in the enclosed and private male-dominated space of railwaymen's mess rooms, goods yards, sheds, railway workshops and carriage works.

Prochaska, in his detailed research into women's philanthropic activities in nineteenth-century England links these discussions of gender and religious historiography by showing the practical ways in which women expressed religious belief and duty and how they were able, simultaneously, to expand their horizons from outside of the domestic environment.<sup>62</sup> He also links women's philanthropic and charitable work to an interest in politics and, ultimately, to their involvement in the suffrage movement.<sup>63</sup> Whilst it may be difficult to draw parallels between women's work for the Railway Mission and women's suffragette and suffragist activities, Prochaska's work, nevertheless, provides an excellent background against which to explore the types of work which women undertook for the Railway Mission and the extent to which they were able to adopt general ideas about religious philanthropy and adapt them to the specific culture of railway employment in the late-Victorian period.

A number of common themes run through these debates about masculine and feminine roles in Victorian Britain. It is generally agreed that social structures and

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<sup>59</sup> *Ibid*, p.24.

<sup>60</sup> *Ibid*, p.5.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

<sup>62</sup> F Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980).

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 228/9.

cultural ideologies gave women responsibility for the home and promoted notions that the public world of work was unsuitable for them. There is also a high level of consensus regarding perceptions of women's deep religious beliefs and the suggestion that they were 'naturally' morally and spiritually superior to men. The debate has shifted from the binary and mutually exclusive positions of separate spheres to one emphasising some flexibility. Religious practice, in its many forms, has been seen almost universally as the main way in which Victorian women could begin to create space and a life for themselves outside of the strict confines of domesticity and social respectability. The main focus in this historiographical debate has been on women's religious and philanthropic work with other women. This thesis will extend the debate by its consideration of women's religious effort in the masculine world of railway employment and, to facilitate an understanding of this male-dominated environment, the following section will consider the historiography of railway development and, in particular, the culture of Victorian railway employment.

### **3. Railways and Railway Culture**

This section will give a brief overview of the historiography relating to the social impact of railway development and also to the culture and conditions of Victorian railway work. It is important to gain an understanding of railway culture in order to discuss the relationships between religious and railway cultures and also to be able to examine women's work with railwaymen in the context of the cultural norms and values of their working conditions and environment.

The Victorian fervour for religion was matched by their excitement at railway development. The contrast between the spiritual, quiet and contemplative culture of prayer, an important part of evangelical culture within the Railway Mission, and the noise, speed and physical upheaval of Victorian railway development was marked. Simmons describes the opportunities which the railway provided for the people of Victorian Britain by opening up the country and giving unprecedented facilities to travel for pleasure, business and employment and also in the pursuit of personal interests.<sup>64</sup> He also comments on the changes to the environment with the construction of track, bridges, viaducts and stations which often led to the wide-scale

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<sup>64</sup> J Simmons, *The Victorian Railway* (London: Thames and Hudson, 2009), Chapter 2.

destruction of much residential accommodation.<sup>65</sup> The impact of railway development was, he claims, visible throughout the country. Kellett also provides detailed information on the impact of railway development on Victorian towns and cities covering social, as well as physical, change.<sup>66</sup> The geographical spread and the high visibility of the railway are important. By 1881, when the Railway Mission was formed, nearly every city, town and village had some form of railway presence. Simmons's<sup>67</sup> description of the ubiquitous nature of railway structure in the form of bridges, viaducts, goods warehouses, stations and signal boxes highlights the fact that, by the period under review, most of the population were familiar with the sights and sounds of the railway network. By this time, railway travel had also become commonplace for all but the very poor and women, particularly middle-class women, were used to seeing railwaymen at work. At stations, for example, they would come into contact with station masters, ticket clerks, porters and other men involved in station work; they may have stayed in the railway hotels which also had become a common part of the Victorian railway landscape. In rural areas, the railwaymen in the signal box and the station, particularly the station master, were well-known figures in the local community and the thesis will provide examples of how this type of familiar acquaintance could lead to the setting up of a Railway Mission branch. In addition, Victorian newspapers frequently contained articles about some aspect of railway development or incident and the issue of railway safety became a common theme in the Victorian press. The railway also featured in Victorian fictional work such as Dicken's *Dombey and Son*<sup>68</sup> and in popular art with W P Frith's painting, *The Railway Station*, perhaps the best well-known piece of Victorian art depicting a railway station. The railway was therefore both physically visible in the built environment and representationally visible in Victorian culture and railwaymen, as a large group of uniformed working-class men, were arguably more readily visible to middle-class women as a target for evangelical opportunity than, for example, the working-class poor in the ghettoised slums described by Ross in her work on London.

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<sup>65</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 2.

<sup>66</sup> J Kellett, *The Impact of Railways on Victorian Cities*, (London: Routledge, 1969).

<sup>67</sup> J Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, Chapter 2.

<sup>68</sup> C Dickens, *Dombey and Son*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1985, first published 1846).

Perkin describes the employment opportunities provided by railway employment, stating that, by 1851, there were 65,000 engine drivers and other railway workers in Britain.<sup>69</sup> By 1901, the end of the period under review, the number had increased to 534,141.<sup>70</sup> The Railway Mission felt in continual need of support to work with the growing number of railwaymen, especially as it became increasingly obvious that little correlation could be drawn between the increase in the numbers of men employed on the railway system and the number of those drawn to the Railway Mission. Research shows that Victorian railway employment could be differentiated from other contemporaneous working-class employment in a number of ways. Simmons comments on the reliability of railway employment with steady, continuous work with, he suggests, an unusual degree of security for the Victorian period.<sup>71</sup> He also comments on other benefits of railway work in, for example, the provision of a uniform which gave the men a reliable source of warm clothing, while some railway companies also provided benefits such as medical assurance and assistance with provident societies and savings banks. Simmons describes how railway work often required a greater degree of literacy than was usual amongst the working class, especially in the mid-nineteenth century.<sup>72</sup> Station staff had to be able to deal with payment for tickets whilst guards and conductors needed to be able to read in order to check them. Literacy was also important to enable engine drivers and firemen to read the companies' detailed rule books. Some railway companies, Simmons notes, were instrumental in improving the education of their employees by establishing institutes and libraries, particularly in large railway towns like Crewe, Ashford and Swindon.

Drummond claims that greater education and training led to the development of a 'labour aristocracy,' an elite of skilled workers who became separate from the rest of the working class.<sup>73</sup> The concept of a labour aristocracy was not exclusive to railway work but it was a significant feature of railway employment. In her study of Crewe, she describes the facilities which the Grand Junction, and subsequently the London and North Western, Railway Company made for its employees and their families.

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<sup>69</sup> H Perkin, *The Age of The Railway* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1979), p.115.

<sup>70</sup> RM Annual Report 1901, p.47 RM/MISS/1/5/1.

<sup>71</sup> J Simmons, *The Railway in England & Wales 1830-1914* (Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1978), p.253.

<sup>72</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p.185.

<sup>73</sup> D Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People 1840-1914*, (Aldershot: Scolar Publishing, 1995), p.3.

She describes how the company built houses, churches and schools for its workers and their families and she applies the analytical framework of paternalism, describing the large railway family with the company providing for its workers, following ideological notions of the male/father providing for his own individual family. This type of provision, she argues, came with a cost since it gave the company significant control over its employees' lives with, not only the job at risk in the case of perceived worker subordination, but also the home and the family's welfare. The patriarchal nature of wider society was, she argues, replicated in the structure and management of many railway companies. Perkin also comments on the benefits of railway employment, describing how railway companies pioneered employment security, long service awards, holidays with pay and even some pension provision. However, he also argues that railway companies tried to exert significant levels of control over their employees suggesting that directors were despotic although they prided themselves as being caring, paternalistic employers.<sup>74</sup> Railway company management then, it is suggested, comprised of a number of almost contradictory elements: there are suggestions of paternalism, benevolence and welfare provision which are simultaneously linked with harsh control and expectations of immediate obedience and strict conformity from the men. This style of management was common throughout the Victorian railway industry and formed an integral part of Victorian railway culture. It was a culture in which there was no place for women and the thesis will explore the ways in which women worked to create space in this male-dominated environment of railway company directors, managers and men.

Kingsford, McKenna and Farrington all provide detailed insights into the working lives of Victorian railwaymen.<sup>75</sup> They comment on the fact that railwaymen were called, and treated as, servants of the company and highlight the ways in which organisation and management followed military lines, with many of the company's managers joining railway company employment from military service. Capt. William O'Brien, for example, was the General Manager of the North Eastern Railway from 1854 to 1871.<sup>76</sup> Kingsford notes the ways in which railway companies expected

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<sup>74</sup> Perkin, *The Age of The Railway*, p.197.

<sup>75</sup> FW Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen. The Emergence and Growth of Railway Labour* (London: Routledge, 1970), F McKenna, *The Railway Workers 1840-1970* (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), J Farrington, *Life on The Lines*, (Ashbourne: Moorland Publishing, 1984).

<sup>76</sup> W Tomlinson, *Tomlinson's North Eastern Railway*, (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1987), p.555.

unquestioning and instant obedience from their men, and that the discipline was very strict, even harsh and quasi-military.<sup>77</sup> This level of discipline, he suggests, required constant submission to authority but also bred feelings of comradeship amongst the men. Farrington comments on the culture of long hours, claiming that many railwaymen worked between, and often in excess of, sixty and seventy hours a week with the result, he suggests, that the majority of railwaymen spent a greater portion of their lives at work than away from it.<sup>78</sup> McKenna, Kingsford and Farrington also comment on the divisions and hierarchies which developed among the men and which, Farrington suggests, became an inherent feature of railway employment. He refers to spatial divisions in terms of workplace, station, sheds, goods yard and signal box, for example, and also to the divisions created by railway grade which, he argues, created something of a class system within and between railwaymen.<sup>79</sup> McKenna makes similar comments and refers to sealed communities in which, he claims, men were divided by grade, uniform and group consciousness.<sup>80</sup> These divisions mirrored those in wider social structures where distinctions within, and between, classes were an integral part of Victorian society. In this study of the Railway Mission, the thesis will use these concepts of physical and cultural space to explore the ways in which women were able to develop some areas of commonality and to build bridges between religious and railway cultures. Kingsford similarly points to class divisions but also to the opportunities for self-improvement offered by many railway companies. Railwaymen, he suggests, had the chance to raise themselves in the social scale at a time when opportunities for the working-class man to better himself were continually emphasised.<sup>81</sup> Bebbington notes that these issues of self-improvement and respectability were also integral features of evangelical religious culture<sup>82</sup> and the thesis will explore the close interconnections between religious affiliation and respectability.

Railway historiography, then, suggests a Victorian railway culture of harsh conditions, long hours, employer paternalism and patriarchy, authoritarianism and hierarchical divisions with the opportunity of benefits which were dependent on

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<sup>77</sup> Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen*, p.xiii.

<sup>78</sup> Farrington, *Life On The Lines*, p.36.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid*, p.17.

<sup>80</sup> McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, p.38.

<sup>81</sup> Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen*, p.xv.

<sup>82</sup> DW Bebbington, *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*, p.126-127.

conformity with the companies' strictly-defined rule books. It also suggests a culture of shared experience and community with, at times, a sense of self containment. As Simmons notes, the railwayman was distinguishable from other working-class men; his uniform created visible difference and, in some railway towns, he and his family lived in segregated communities.<sup>83</sup> Simmons also claims that the railway profession was inward looking and he refers to railwaymen at all levels as 'a body of self-contained specialists within British society.'<sup>84</sup> He suggests that railwaymen shared a common 'railway' language of special terms and phrases which, he argues, involved a fusion of the new language of technology with the familiar one of order and control.<sup>85</sup> The use of language and rhetoric in Railway Mission literature and reports will, as already noted, form an important part of this research. Victorian railwaymen formed a specific and easily identifiable workforce with its own cultural norms and values and the thesis will consider the ways in which evangelical women, through the medium of the Railway Mission, were able to create space within, and links between, railway and religious cultures in their efforts to bring religion to the vast numbers of men employed in the late-Victorian railway industry.

### **The Original Contribution of this Thesis**

This thesis will link these three strands of historical research, contributing a new dimension to debates about the social construction of gender and the concept of separate spheres by exploring links between the religious and railway cultures of the late-Victorian period. This is a new area of study since the Railway Mission records were only made available for research in 2004 and have, to date, been hardly used by scholars. In its focus on the Railway Mission, the thesis will place the debate on the concept of separate spheres in a fresh physical and cultural location, that of the male-dominated railway industry. While research into women's religious and philanthropic work has hitherto focused on the work undertaken by middle-class women with working-class women and children in Britain and overseas, this new study of women's work with the male-dominated railway workforce of the late-nineteenth century will go some way to fill this void in the existing literature.

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<sup>83</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p. 121.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid*, p.118.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid*, Chapter 7.

A study of women's work with, and for, the Railway Mission cannot be undertaken and fully understood in isolation: it needs to be set in the context of contemporaneous religious and railway cultures and the thesis will therefore also consider the relationships between the seemingly diverse cultures of railway and religion in the late-nineteenth century. This study will differ from research already undertaken into religion and railway and will provide a new perspective in its exploration of the relationships between railway and religious cultures in the late-Victorian period. Previous work has, for example, considered the tensions between the commerciality of running trains on a Sunday and religious concerns about keeping the Sabbath day free from business and commercial activity. This was a contentious issue, not only with the religious middle classes, but also between railway company directors and shareholders which resulted in each company adopting its own policy on Sunday rail services.<sup>86</sup> Comment has also been made on the links between railway and religion in the running of the large-scale excursion trains which were often commissioned by religious organisations such as Sunday Schools or church groups. These organisations tended to use the lure of a train trip as a means of attracting the working classes to their religious activities and, as Sunday was the only day off for the majority of workers, the apparent contradiction between the sanctification of Sunday and the commerciality of railway enterprise had to be accommodated.<sup>87</sup> The important point to note here is that these links and relationships between religious and railway cultures involved the railway as a business enterprise: this thesis will provide a new and alternative approach since it will focus on the relationships between religion and the railway, not as a corporate entity, but in terms of the thousands of railwaymen who manned the stations, trains, signal boxes, goods yards, warehouses and engineering works of the Victorian railway industry. The use of the word 'manned' is not accidental – the nineteenth-century railway workforce formed a vast army of masculine activity in which there was little room for women. This thesis will explore the ways in which women created religious space within the male stronghold of the Victorian railway industry and how they attempted to develop links between religious values and activities and the masculine hub of Victorian railway technological modernity.

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<sup>86</sup> See, for example, Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, pp 282-9.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, pp.284-5 and H Perkin, *The Age of The Railway*, p.176.

## Methodology and Sources

The main primary sources used in this thesis are the Railway Mission records which, as discussed, became available for research in 2004 and therefore provide new and relatively unexplored sources of information. Although the records are not complete, they provide a useful and unique insight into this evangelical organisation for Victorian railwaymen. My previous research on the Railway Mission<sup>88</sup> focused on quantitative criteria to show that, although the Mission enjoyed initial success, it failed to meet its ultimate goal of converting, or even raising the religious affiliation of, the large numbers of men in the Victorian railway network. This thesis will focus much more closely on the culture of the Railway Mission and the role of women within the organisation. There will therefore be limited use of quantitative primary records and, in line with the aims of this thesis, a more qualitative approach will be taken which will focus on the experiences and lives of the women who worked for the Mission in the late-Victorian period.

As already discussed, the scope of the research will focus on the Mission in England and will be restricted to the twenty year period 1881 to 1901 although reference may be made to records outside of this geographical area and chronological period where appropriate to augment or clarify the findings of the period under review. Source availability has also set some limits on the approach. The thesis will not undertake a geographical analysis of the Railway Mission branch network as there is no definitive record of the development of the network for a number of reasons. Firstly, reports in the Mission records vary as to how many branches opened and were active during the period under review. The Railway Mission journal, the *Railway Signal*, gave monthly reports of branch activity but did not reflect the entire network at any one time. The frequency and accuracy of the reports shown in the *Railway Signal* depended upon the enthusiasm and ability of the branch secretary or, indeed, upon the branch having a secretary in the first place. Some branches were very small and comprised only of a few railwaymen working long hours in the employment of the various railway companies. In 1886, for example, the branch in Keighley, Yorkshire

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<sup>88</sup> A. Mallery, *Souls on The Line: the Railway Mission 1881-1921*, (M.A. dissertation, University of York, 2010).

had only five members<sup>89</sup> and, even after the growth years of the late-nineteenth century, the Hexham branch in Northumberland still only had five members.<sup>90</sup> Typically, such branches did not submit reports to the paper with any degree of regularity. Secondly, even those branches which were keen to submit reports and which had the membership to play an active role in the branch network may have had very little to report except perhaps a special service held on a particular anniversary or similar commemorative occasion; many branches did not therefore submit reports on a regular basis. It is also impossible to know whether all the reports which were submitted were published. It is possible that lack of space may have excluded some entries. It is also possible that editorial control may have influenced any selection process for the inclusion of reports. The thesis will discuss the ways in which the Mission executive was keen to promote success and it is possible that editorial selection practice may have excluded some branch reports which focused on difficulties or failures.

Another limitation of the sources is that, while the Mission published annual reports giving details of its branches, only a few are still extant. Even these more official and objective publications were dependent upon the local representative providing details which were accurate and in time to meet publication deadlines. This was not always the case and reminders about the deadlines were published by the Mission with a warning that, if they were missed, branch details would be omitted from the annual guide. The guides show that, in York, for example, there was a branch in 1884 and 1885 but no further entries were made until 1902. It is not clear whether there was no branch activity during the intervening years or whether it was simply the case that no reports were made or included in the guides.

In order to achieve the key objectives of this research, I began by exploring the Railway Mission records to find details of the women who worked for the Mission. The large majority were unknown outside of Mission circles and have remained unknown. This was, therefore, an excellent opportunity to uncover the lives and activities of these 'ordinary' women as they worked with the large numbers of men working in the railway network of the late-Victorian period. I used the *Railway Signal*,

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<sup>89</sup> RMCA Handbook 1886 RM/MISS/1/9/2.

<sup>90</sup> RMCA Handbook 1900 RM/MISS/1/9/2.

the monthly journal of the Mission, to obtain initial details of these women. The publication, although aimed primarily at railwaymen, was widely available through a network of agents with responsibility for its sales nationally. It was predominantly a religious journal with, for example, excerpts from Biblical texts, moral stories and articles about conversion and salvation, religious poetry and hymns, but it also had a regular section called 'Lights Along the Line' which gave updates on Mission activities such as the opening of a new branch and details of Special Missions which had been, or were to be, held. In addition, it generally contained a special feature about a well-known religious figure or a leading member of the Railway Mission. Occasionally, the article was about a woman working for the Mission, and these are of particular interest to this thesis. In the 'Lights Along the Line' section, reports were made of branch activities and, as discussed above, these reports were spasmodic with some branches being much more active than others. They do not therefore give a comprehensive picture of women's work in the Mission, but they do give some details of the women's names and the branch with which they were associated. In addition, the newspaper published obituaries of well-known Mission workers, a small number of whom were women. Details were sparse and often, for example, only included the woman's surname or with just an initial; Christian names were only very rarely provided. From this type of information, I tried to trace the women through digitalised census records to gain details of their age, marital status, family background and circumstances. Where this was possible, I then built profiles of the women who worked for the Mission. The lack of detail in Mission records meant that it was extremely unlikely that I would find details of all of the women whom I identified but the use of digitalised census records did enable me to find much more information than would have been possible through a paper-based search. Digitalised census records also enabled me to research a much wider geographical area than would have previously been possible. As fully digitalised census records are not yet available for Scotland and those for Wales and Northern Ireland are sketchy, this research has, as discussed, focused upon the work of the Railway Mission in England. Further advances in the technological recording of census information may facilitate research into these other areas of Mission activity in the future.

Other Mission records were also helpful in identifying the women. The Mission's annual guides give details of the branches, their location and a summary of their activities which occasionally included details of the names and addresses of the women leaders. This additional information was helpful in identifying a woman or confirming the identity of a woman already traced. Some records are held for a very small number of branches but these provide only limited, factual information. An equally small number of commemorative pamphlets are held giving the history of a particular branch. Again, these give some information about women who worked in the branch although, as these pamphlets were written retrospectively and from the memories of many years in the past, it was difficult to ascertain the accuracy of these sources. Such accounts are also likely to accentuate the positivity of past success rather than the sometimes mundane day-to-day activity of the running of the branch.

There are no records which provide details of Mission structure at branch level. There are scanty details in the *Railway Signal* which suggest that there was middle-class interest in, and support for, some Mission branches and these are corroborated by examples of local middle-class men and women attending prestigious Mission events. At other branches, however, it appears that only local Christian railwaymen were involved in the establishment and running of a Mission branch. Despite the lack of evidence about any formal organised structure at branch level, it does seem likely that some form of arrangements would have been made between Mission branch members. Unusually for the period, there does not appear to have been a layer of male leadership at branch level to which women were accountable. Where women became branch superintendents, they seem to have enjoyed a significant degree of autonomy in the ways in which they ran the branch although they would have been mindful of the need to conform to the demands of the male-dominated Mission executive. The Mission's Minute Books are very brief, noting only the outline of the issues discussed and the actions to be taken. They do, however, provide an interesting insight into the ways in which Mission rhetoric in respect of women changed towards the end of the period under review when a small number of women began to be paid for their work with the Mission. This will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 4.

My second objective was to consider why the women I identify chose to work for the Railway Mission. This was a difficult area to explore because, as with many 'ordinary' women, there was very little biographical information in the form of letters, diaries and memoirs. I therefore turned to reports in the *Railway Signal* to gain an understanding of the types of work which women undertook for the Mission. I also explored the extent to which they may have been motivated by evangelical belief, commonly accepted as the driving force behind women's religious and philanthropic work in the nineteenth century, and how far they may have benefitted personally from their involvement with the Mission. Of particular relevance to this part of the research were the reports of the annual conferences held by the Mission. These were attended by the senior men of the organisation, some Christian railwaymen and some of the more well-known women in the Mission. As part of the conference, reports of branch work were given by local delegates, some of whom were women, and these accounts were occasionally reported in the *Railway Signal* verbatim. These gave a unique opportunity to 'hear' the women speak albeit in the controlled environment of a Mission conference and, although few in number, they were very helpful in exploring their motivations for, and perceptions of, Mission work.

The third aim of this research was to consider how working-class railwaymen responded to the Mission and the women who worked within it. I also wanted to explore the male executives' views of the Mission's women workers. I looked in detail at the rhetoric and language of Mission reports and articles in the *Railway Signal* to see how far they reflected the socially constructed norms of class and gender of the late-Victorian period. I then considered whether there was any change in Mission language and rhetoric during the period under review to reflect the social, economic and political changes of the time in order to assess how far these cultural constructions of gender and class created opportunities for the women or, conversely, whether they hindered their attempts to create working relationships between middle-class gentility and working-class railway masculinity.

In addition to Railway Mission and census records, an overview of contemporaneous newspaper records and journals was undertaken to see how far women's work in the Mission was reported. This had a very limited success. Some local newspaper reports provided additional detail of branch activity but, although references were

sometimes made to men in leadership positions, references to women were very rare and it proved very difficult to link this scarce information with census records. Finally, although the Mission was not a temperance organisation, it did support and promote temperance, another important movement in the late-Victorian period when women in the Mission were active. Although a study of temperance activity is beyond the scope of this thesis, a limited review of temperance publications showed that a small number of women working in the Mission were also involved in temperance work.

## **Chapter Outline**

### **Chapter 1: The Railway Mission in Context**

Chapter 1 discusses the development of the Railway Mission within the context of the social, religious and railway cultures of the late-Victorian period; this facilitates an understanding of these seemingly disparate cultures and an appreciation of the different spaces within, and between which, women in the Mission worked. It examines the changing face of the concept of 'separate spheres' in the late-nineteenth century as women were moving away from the ties of domesticity and it also explores the changing culture of railway employment as the men tried to break free from the often excessive demands of their railway company employers to establish themselves as a respectable and responsible workforce which had needs and demands of its own.

### **Chapter 2: Women and the Railway Mission**

Chapter 2 provides a detailed analysis of the women whom I have identified from Mission and census records to provide a profiled analysis of the women involved in Mission work. As census data for England is readily available at a number of websites and, in order to avoid an excessive number of footnotes, references are provided only for the census year where appropriate. Where more detailed information is discussed such as probate details, full website information is given. The chapter discusses the ages of the women, their marital status and their family

backgrounds and also examines in detail the type of Mission work which they undertook. Women were involved with the Mission in a wide variety of ways and the chapter discusses how they developed complementary roles and how networks of work and of friendship grew from their involvement with the Railway Mission. This analysis and discussion will provide a comprehensive picture and contextual understanding of many of the hitherto unknown women who worked for the Mission in the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

### **Chapter 3: Women's Mission Strategies**

Chapter 3 explores the strategies which women used to create pathways between, and within, the seemingly binary cultural constructions of feminine religious gentility and the idealised strength of working-class railway masculinity. It considers the ways in which women created relationships with the men through established evangelical practice and how they also adapted this practice to take account of the specific culture of Victorian railway employment. The chapter also discusses the strategies of communication which the women used to reach the men and the ways in which they were able to take advantage of the technological modernity of the Victorian railway network in their work for the Mission.

## **Chapter 4: Women and Mission Culture**

Chapter 4 discusses women's experience of Railway Mission work. It uses a case-study approach to consider why women chose to work for the Mission and explores the influence of an evangelical upbringing and of other women's life-writing on their decisions about mission work. It also considers the ways in which women could benefit from their involvement with the Railway Mission. In addition, the chapter considers how the women were received and perceived by railwaymen through a case-study of women's leadership in the Ashford branch of the Mission. Then, using Mission records, it explores the more general ways in which working-class railwaymen viewed the Mission and its female leaders and discusses the ways in which language was used in Mission reports. It considers the extent to which this may have reflected wider cultural assumptions of women's roles during the late-nineteenth century. Finally, the chapter considers whether women's experience of the work and the use of socially constructed and gendered language may be shown to have changed during the period under review.

In the conclusion to this thesis, I will summarise the findings of the research. I will discuss how far the aims of the thesis have been achieved and consider how its findings impact on the historiographical debates outlined in the Introduction. I will highlight the new areas of knowledge and new insights offered by this study and I will also consider the ways in which the thesis has opened up the way for further research in the future.



Fig. 3 Railway Mission Hall, Horsham

<https://commons.wikimedia.org>

## **Chapter 1**

### **The Railway Mission in Context**

A historiographical overview of the general literature on gender roles and on both railway and religious cultures over the course of the nineteenth century has been undertaken in the Introduction to this thesis; this chapter will pay closer attention to the last two decades of the century and explore the changing economic, social and cultural trends of the period which are likely to have had an impact on the growth and development of the Railway Mission. I begin by briefly outlining the salient social, political and economic developments which affected the lives of men and women during the last twenty years of the nineteenth century. Part 1 of the chapter will then discuss the impact of these developments on railway culture during the period under review, while Part 2 will consider religious culture in the last two decades of the nineteenth century in order to provide a more precise sense of the environment in which the Railway Mission sought to establish itself as a viable religious organisation. This will also facilitate an understanding of the ways in which the Railway Mission may have followed or, conversely differentiated itself from, other contemporaneous religious organisations of the late-nineteenth century. Finally, Part 3 of the chapter will examine the origins, growth and development of the Railway Mission during the period under review, setting this discussion within, and as part of, an overall review of the cultural values and ideologies of the late-Victorian period.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, reform, at both local and central government level, had begun to introduce social and political changes in working-class lives. Nationally, the Reform Acts of 1867 and 1884 had extended the franchise to give electoral representation to most working men; the Education Act of 1870 had formalised the provision of elementary education whilst the Factory Acts of the 1850s and the 1871 Bank Holiday Act had improved working conditions and

brought some increase in leisure time to many employees.<sup>1</sup> A working-class culture, separate and distinct from that of the middle classes, was related to, and developed from, these changes and, although railwaymen, as the next section will discuss, shared a culture unique to their employment, they were also affected by these more generic changes to the working-class way of life.

McCord notes that movements in both prices and wages contributed to social improvement and that, 'by 1880, the majority of industrial workers enjoyed at least a half day holiday and, by the end of the century, only a minority were tied to a full six day working week.'<sup>2</sup> Railwaymen did not always benefit from these changes to the hours of working-class employment and the thesis will consider the ways in which women in the Railway Mission worked to circumvent the problems of the irregular hours and shift patterns which meant that the men could not always easily participate in regular religious events. A reduction in working hours increased the opportunity for, and extended the range of, leisure activities and Thompson, Perkin and Simmons all note a growth in organised sporting activities whilst the diversity and growth in popularity of music halls, choral societies, cycling and walking clubs, and travel is also well documented.<sup>3</sup> Redfern has shown that railwaymen shared this enthusiasm for increased leisure and particularly the growing interest in sport; the railway town of Crewe, for example, had ten cricket and four football teams at the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>4</sup> By the 1880s and 1890s, leisure had become an integral part of a working-class railway culture upon which the Railway Mission was working to impose its own ethos of religion and salvation: it had therefore to compete against a wide range of leisure activities for the men's time and support.

The political reforms of the period, which extended the franchise to many working-class men, led to increased interest in political issues and trade union activity during the period under review whilst increased male earnings led to a growth in the

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<sup>1</sup> N McCord, *British History 1815-1906*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), p.363.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid*, p.451.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), Chapter 7, McCord, *British History*, p. 459-461; for a more detailed discussion of leisure in Victorian Britain, see Judith Flanders, *Consuming Passions, Leisure and Pleasure in Victorian Britain*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2006).

<sup>4</sup> A Redfern, Crewe; Leisure in a Railway Town in *Leisure in Britain 1780-1939*, eds J Walton and J Walvin, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983), p.119.

ideology of the family wage economy. The concept of the family wage was based on the ideal of the male breadwinner with a dependent wife and was fuelled by the ideological notions of separate spheres and of women having responsibility for the spiritual and moral welfare of the family. It also served as a form of protectionism, supported by the growing trade union movement, in the ways in which it legitimised the rationalisation and maintenance of higher pay levels for men.<sup>5</sup> The ideology of the family wage economy thus supported married women's marginalisation in the workplace and ideologically limited women's role in the public sphere to that of charitable, philanthropic and religious activity, generally on an unpaid basis.

During this period, women, particularly those from the middle classes, were also beginning to push for greater participation and representation in political and economic life. They were trying to win the right to vote, seeking better access to higher education, gaining more forms of paid employment and fighting for control over their own financial affairs.<sup>6</sup> They gained some success. The Married Women's Property Acts of 1870 and 1882, for example, gave married women control over the assets which they had owned at the time of their marriage: prior to this legislation, control had been passed over to their husbands at the time of marriage.<sup>7</sup> However, the social and moral ideologies of the mid-Victorian period which were discussed in the Introduction to this thesis and which prescribed an ideology of separate spaces for men and women still prevailed during the late-nineteenth century and, indeed, into the early years of the twentieth century. Ideologically, men were still seen as the main inhabitants of the commercial and industrial arena whilst women retained the role of moral and spiritual guardian with the responsibility of exerting a good influence within both the family and the wider community. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, however, women were beginning to make inroads into some areas of the public arena. Tosh notes that, by the mid-point of the period under review, about 240,000 women were employed in the professional occupations considered suitable for women such as teaching, nursing and clerical work,

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on the family wage and its impact on women, see, for example, M Barrett and M McIntosh, *The Family Wage*, in *The Changing Experience of Women*, eds E Whitelegg & V Beechey, (Oxford: Martin Robertson, 1982).

<sup>6</sup> For a broad discussion on feminist action during this period, see, for example, S Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2004).

<sup>7</sup> J Tosh, *A Man's Place. Masculinity and the Middle Class Home in Victorian England*, (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.157.

suggesting that, by 1891, 'the working girl had become a familiar feature of offices and shops in all the big cities.'<sup>8</sup> Harrison links increasing opportunities for women to technological innovations such as 'the telephone and the typewriter' and to a general widening of 'the tertiary sector of the economy with its consequent demand for more white-collar and white-blouse employees.' After 1880, he suggests, 'jobs such as typists, telephone operators, post office employees, school teachers and civil servants became increasingly available to women.'<sup>9</sup> Shop work also provided employment opportunities for many girls in the late-nineteenth century, especially with the growing popularity of department stores. Cox and Hobley refer to 'a new type of worker for a new kind of shop work,' suggesting that 'by the 1890s, there were a quarter of a million shopgirls in Britain.'<sup>10</sup> Ross describes women's involvement in philanthropic work in the 1860s as leading to opportunities for women by providing a wedge 'with which they could pry their way into national life as they moved across the shifting divide between the public and private spheres'<sup>11</sup> so that, by the late 1870s and the 1880s, 'adventurous women were visibly making new claims on urban spaces of all kinds.'<sup>12</sup> By the time of the period under review, then, women had increasing opportunities in the public domain. The pace of change, however, was not uniform and many middle-class women in particular remained constrained by mid-nineteenth century ideologies of respectability.

## **Part 1: Aspects of Railway Culture 1881-1901**

By 1881, the construction and development of the British railway system had been substantially completed and, geographically, was very extensive. Freeman notes that, by 1901, Britain's railway network had a total route mileage of almost 19,000 miles<sup>13</sup> and Kellett states that railways had, by this time, 'made a massive and tangible impact upon the fabric of each major British city'<sup>14</sup> while Simmons, as noted in the Introduction, comments upon the ubiquity of railway infrastructure throughout

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p.152.

<sup>9</sup> JFC Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain 1875-1901*, (London: Fontana Press, 1990), p.167.

<sup>10</sup> P Cox and A Hobley, *Shopgirls. True Stories of friendship, hardship and triumph from behind the counter*. (London: Arrow Books, 2014), p.34.

<sup>11</sup> Ross, *Slum Travelers, Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920*, (London: University of California Press, 2007), p.19.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid*, p.8.

<sup>13</sup> M Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.4.

<sup>14</sup> JR Kellett, *The Impact of Railway on Victorian Cities*, (London: Routledge, 1969), p.2.

the urban and rural environment of late-Victorian Britain. The extent of the physical impact could not be overlooked and meant that a huge part of the late-Victorian population lived with, or at least could not fail to be aware of, the railway. Railways formed a significant part of Victorian economic and social culture. Freeman describes the railway as being 'deeply embedded in the evolving structures of Victorian society. It echoed those structures and interacted with them,' and he refers to the many ways in which railways came to be seen not as 'institutional undertakings' but as 'social phenomena.'<sup>15</sup> By this time, too, the railways played a significant part in the occupational structure of the late-Victorian workforce. According to Wojtczak, by 1900, 5% of the British working population were employed by a railway company<sup>16</sup> and Freeman notes that, by the end of the period under review in 1901, railway companies had over 621,000 employees.<sup>17</sup>

Railway employment had a particular culture and community which differentiated the work from most other forms of employment in the late-nineteenth century. McKenna, in his detailed and personal insight into railwaymen and railway culture, refers to the 'railway bailiwick' of the Victorian period and to 'a new form of industrial anthropology, a tribalistic grouping of men based on elaborate divisions of labour, a hierarchy of groups and a ritualistic adherence to territory, myth, symbolism and insignia unknown outside the specific boundaries.'<sup>18</sup> Railway companies demanded, and largely gained, loyalty from the men they employed: McKenna refers to a 'prototype, an "organisation" man'<sup>19</sup> and this was particularly significant where the company provided housing along with the infrastructure for an ordered life. In Crewe, for example, the London and North Western Railway Company effectively built a railway town with housing, schools, a church and socially and morally approved leisure facilities.<sup>20</sup> McKenna notes that 'a company cottage with attached garden provided an inducement for any prospective railway workers and was also a useful barrier to militancy.'<sup>21</sup> This type of community encouraged loyalty to the company, not only from the men, but also from the family with sons following their fathers into

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<sup>15</sup> M Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, (London: Yale University Press, 1999), p.19.

<sup>16</sup> H Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, (Hastings: The Hastings Press, 2005), p.2.

<sup>17</sup> M Freeman, *Railways and the Victorian Imagination*, p.181.

<sup>18</sup> F McKenna, *The Railway Workers 1840 -1970*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), pp 40-41.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.41.

<sup>20</sup> See D Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, (Aldershot: Scolar Publishing, 1995).

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid*, p.50.

railway work and with large extended families being dependent on the railway for employment security and for the provision of amenities: in return, the company gained control over many aspects of the men's lives. This type of relationship between company and man was well-established by the period under review. Andrews, in his study of railway employment in East Kent, for example, found that 1,366 men were employed at the South Eastern Railway works in Ashford in 1881, the year that the Railway Mission was founded.<sup>22</sup> He refers to railway work as 'quality employment' because of its security and because, providing that the men worked well and met company expectations, railway companies 'were good, if paternalistic employers.'<sup>23</sup> He also refers to opportunities for promotion within the hierarchical structure of railway employment: 'every cleaner looked forward to the day when he would be an express passenger driver, and every porter had dreams of being a station master. More perhaps than in any other industry in Victorian Britain there was a strong *esprit de corps*.'<sup>24</sup> This strict hierarchical structure led to divisions between, and within, groups of men; as McKenna notes, 'By grade, by uniform, by group consciousness, men were divided territorially into sealed communities.'<sup>25</sup> The class distinctions of late-Victorian Britain were replicated in these hierarchical occupational divisions of railway employment.

The demands of railway employment could impact upon the men's personal and family life and the insular nature of the culture meant that men spent many hours together at work and they often also shared their leisure activities. Despite the embryonic development of trade union activity during the period under review, the culture of strict discipline which was enforced by a regime of punishments and fines remained in place for the vast majority of railwaymen. Relatively few men had any respite from the constant surveillance of the supervisory and managerial staff of stations, workshops and goods depots. As Howell points out, only locomotive crews working on the engines and the signaller who worked alone in his signal box, were able to escape the constant surveillance and the jurisdiction of stations and goods yards and he suggests that 'obedience and deference were central to the culture of

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<sup>22</sup> FWG Andrews, 'Employment on the railways in East Kent 1841-1914', *The Journal of Transport History*, 21.1 (2000), p.62.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid*, p.66.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid*, pp 67-68.

<sup>25</sup> F McKenna, 'Victorian Railway Workers', *History Workshop* 1 (1976), p.42.

the industry.<sup>26</sup> Railwaymen were called, and treated as, servants of the company and Henry Tennant, a director of the North Eastern Railway, made the position clear during a Select Committee Enquiry into the hours which railwaymen were required to work in 1891. In response to a question from the committee, he confirmed that the whole of a railwayman's time belonged to the company which employed him.<sup>27</sup> This meant, as McKenna points out, that, even when off duty, the railwayman had to be ready to turn out at the company's call and that, if he failed to do so, he would lose the pay for that day and could face the possibility of dismissal.<sup>28</sup> The hardships of railway employment led to some level of solidarity and community especially in residential areas with high levels of railway family occupation. Howell refers to the 'inclusive nature of railway employment'<sup>29</sup> as an important and integral part of railway culture and Wojtczak also comments on the links between the railwayman's working environment and his home life, claiming that his job 'dominated family life' with family and domestic routines being arranged around his shifts.<sup>30</sup> It was common for a number of family members to be employed by the railway company and railway families often lived closely together especially in railway towns such as Crewe, Swindon and York. In areas of high railway family occupation, men were likely to spend their leisure time in the company of fellow railwaymen, sometimes in the institutes or societies provided by the railway company, or, as the rhetoric of the Railway Mission often supposed, in the local public house.<sup>31</sup> An increasing interest in sport led to the formation of local football and cricket teams: these were often linked to the local railway company, or at least to railway employment, and again provided a sense of community and the continuance of railwaymen's networks outside of the workplace.<sup>32</sup> By the late-nineteenth century, these structures of railway employment which led to communities within, and as part of, railway employment were well established.

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<sup>26</sup> D Howell, *Respectable Radicals, Studies in the Politics of Trade Unionism*, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p.3.

<sup>27</sup> F McKenna, 'Victorian Railway Workers.'

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid*, p.49.

<sup>29</sup> D Howell, *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the Politics of Trade Unionism*, ((Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999), p.8.

<sup>30</sup> H Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, (Hastings: Hastings Press, 2005), p.2.

<sup>31</sup> For more details of a railway town, see, for example, D Drummond, *Crewe. Railway Town, Company and People*.

<sup>32</sup> See, for example, A Redfern, *Crewe: Leisure in a Railway Town in Leisure in Britain 1780-1939*, eds J Walton and J Walvin (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1983).

By 1881, the culture of instant obedience and uncomplaining loyalty toward the railway companies, discussed in the Introduction, was beginning to be questioned by the men and one of the main influences on railway culture in the late-nineteenth century was a growing interest in trade union activity. In addition to the harsh working conditions, also discussed in the Introduction to this thesis, railway employment also carried a high risk of accidents, an issue upon which the Railway Mission placed particular focus. In an interview with the *Pall Mall Gazette* in August 1888, the Secretary of the Railway Mission, Mr D Spencer, estimated that the average number of accidents in which railwaymen were involved to be in the region of 1,000 per year with about 400 of these leading to death.<sup>33</sup> The high number of accidents was linked to the long hours which railwaymen worked: Kingsford found that, in 1879, just before the period under review, men in a variety of railway grades worked twelve hour shifts<sup>34</sup> whilst official enquiries into railway accidents found incidents of men working much longer than this. The Royal Commission on Railway Accidents in 1877 found that, in addition to a regular duty of ten to twelve hours, men regularly worked a further four to five hours overtime and that railway guards and drivers often worked ten to twelve hours overtime.<sup>35</sup> Raynes described the 1870s as an 'atrociously hard time for railwaymen' and the men as 'wage slaves in a real and grim sense.'<sup>36</sup> Despite the evidence of long working hours, the men themselves were often blamed for these accidents. By 1881, when the Railway Mission was founded, railwaymen had begun to react to these issues and, in line with the more general increase in trade union activity discussed in the previous section, were starting to take collective action. The Amalgamation of Railway Servants (ASRS), forerunner to the National Union of Railwaymen, was founded in 1871, the Association of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) in 1880 and the Railway Clerks Association (RCA) in 1887.<sup>37</sup> This increase in collective action coincided with the political action leading to the legislative reform of 1884 which extended the franchise and also with the embryonic years of the Railway Mission. Railwaymen's

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<sup>33</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette* 3 August 1888.

<sup>34</sup> P Kingsford, *Victorian Railwaymen. The Emergence and Growth of Railway Labour 1830-1970*, p.118.

<sup>35</sup> J R Raynes, *Engines and Men. The History of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen*, (Leeds: Goodall & Suddick, 1921), p.72.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid*, p.24.

<sup>37</sup> For more information of railway trade unions, see D Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, PS Bagwell, *The Railwaymen. The History of the National Union of Railwaymen*, (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1963) and JR Raynes, *The History of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen*.

interest in trade union activity was reflected in membership numbers during a period in which railway trade unions and the Railway Mission were simultaneously competing for railwaymen's time and support. By the beginning of 1900, the ASRS had 65,000 members and ASLEF, 9,000<sup>38</sup> whilst membership of the Railway Mission appears to have peaked in 1890 with about 6,000 members.<sup>39</sup> It is important to note the very diverse nature of trade union and religious organisations and to acknowledge that comparisons between them may not be appropriate: however, the large disparities between the membership levels of these contemporaneous organisations do reflect the men's response to the competing calls for their time and allegiance during the period under review.

One of the main features of Victorian railway culture was the overwhelming focus on masculinity: it was a culture in which women were marginalised, if not hidden from view. British railway culture in the late-nineteenth century appeared to encapsulate an exclusively male environment. Yet, as both Wojtczak and Matheson both show, women were employed on the railways during the period under review.<sup>40</sup> It is beyond the scope of this thesis to discuss women's railway work during the late-Victorian period in detail but it is worth noting that women worked in a variety of occupations and settings. Wojtczak divides railway work into 'wages' which she terms as 'manual workers on stations and trains etc' and 'salaried' work as 'administration, booking offices and technical departments and all supervisory and managerial staff, overseeing both wages and salaried grade staff.'<sup>41</sup> Her research shows that women were, unsurprisingly, employed in work of a domestic nature such as cleaning, cooking, sewing and laundry work and reveals that there were 1633 women in railway wage grades in 1901.<sup>42</sup> Both Matheson and Wojtczak describe the introduction of women into railway clerical work and note its subordinate position to men's work both in substance as well as in pay. Women's involvement in routine railway clerical occupations was part of the wider trend, discussed above, of predominantly single women becoming increasingly involved in clerical work during the late-nineteenth century. Wojtczak points to the Education Act of 1870 which

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<sup>38</sup> JR Raynes, *The History of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers*, p.111.

<sup>39</sup> *A Short History of the Railway Mission*, date and author unknown, RM/MISS/1/9/19.

<sup>40</sup> H Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, R Matheson, *The Fair Sex: Women and the Great Western Railway*, (The History Press, Stroud, 2010).

<sup>41</sup> H Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, pp.3/4.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

provided free schooling so that, by the 1880s, many more girls were 'sufficiently literate to be employed in clerical work.'<sup>43</sup> She also agrees with Harrison's suggestion that the technological modernity of the telephone and the typewriter created greater occupational opportunity for women, particularly within the increasingly growing world of railway administration. However, the overwhelmingly male dominance of Victorian railway culture, even during the late-nineteenth century when women were beginning to take a more visibly active role in the public world of employment, meant that women, and their work, were marginalised. Divall, in the foreword to Wojtczak's book, *Railwaywomen*, blames the established and long-standing attitudes and practices of railway managers for women's marginalisation in the railway workplace while Wojtczak herself notes that the terms and conditions of employment for women were added as footnotes to those of men.<sup>44</sup> The clear implication, of course, was that women needed to be treated differently from, and secondary to, the male workforce. Matheson, in her paper in *Railway Studies*, suggests that women were employed, not because of any sense of their right to participate in the workplace, but, primarily, as and when it suited the railway company to use female labour. In her discussion of women's work in the Great Western Company's trimming workshops in Swindon, for example, she claims that the exclusively female workshop was created, not as an act of equality or altruism, but was related more to the benefits it brought to the company. These women, she argues, came predominantly from local railway families and led to the 'possibility of marriage for the influx of single young men and for the sons of indigenous railway families' thus helping to avoid the loss of skilled workers from the area. Women also provided a cheap form of labour.<sup>45</sup>

Ideological perceptions of railway space as masculine territory also impacted on notions about railway travel. Women were able to use railway space legitimately if they were cared for, and chaperoned by, men: as lone travellers, they were regarded with suspicion and in need of special attention. The ways in which women were marginalised in the male-domination of railway space were exemplified in Victorian fictional genre, in newspaper reports and in the many travel guides which were

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<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>44</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>45</sup> R Matheson, 'Women in the Workshops' *Workshops, Identity and Labour*, Working Papers in Railway Studies Number Three (York, 1998), p.25.

published during the second half of the nineteenth century. The modernity and unknown qualities of railway travel led to the publication of these guides which advised the public, in great detail, how they should go about travel by train. The contents page of a guide first published in 1862 illustrates the vast number of topics covered from, for example, 'how to buy a ticket', 'travelling costume,' 'travelling equipage', 'looking after luggage' and 'materials for comfort.'<sup>46</sup> Of particular interest is a section entitled 'Sending a Female and Children by Railway Unaccompanied:' not only are women linked to, and treated as, children in need of special arrangements, the heading suggests that they should be sent in the same way as a parcel. They are portrayed as incapable of independent travel, as passive, not active, passengers for whom travel without a suitable male companion was clearly outside of the desired norm. The 'female traveller' is firstly advised to 'contrive the services of a husband, brother or other male relative to see her off' whilst 'the person who has charge of the lady' is told to put her in a carriage with other women. In the unsatisfactory situation where 'a female is obliged, not only to travel alone, but to go to the station alone, she should place herself under the care of one of the policemen or guards.'<sup>47</sup> Further advice is given for the end of the journey in a section entitled 'Disposal of Ladies and Children.' This section provides advice for the male traveller and, as the assumption is that the women are suitably accompanied by a male, they are no longer referred to as 'female travellers' but as 'ladies.' The male is advised that, if he is accompanied by 'ladies, by children or by both, it is essential that he should remove them out of the noise, the bustle and confusion inseparably attendant on the arrival of a train.' Again, women are considered as children in their apparent inability to take care of themselves and in their need to be protected from normal station activity; there is also again the suggestion of the women being treated as parcels or luggage to be 'disposed of.' Interestingly, the following two sections of the guide address the problems of 'Looking After Luggage' and 'Reclaiming Lost Luggage.'<sup>48</sup> Whilst rail travel had become more commonplace during the twenty-year period between the publication of this guide and the founding of the Railway Mission, it is clear that rail travel was seen primarily as a masculine activity, undertaken in

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<sup>46</sup> J Simmons, *The Railway Travellers' Handbook*, (Bath: Adams and Dart, 1971), pp5-6.

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid*, p.53.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 95-96.

masculine space and this notion remained valid during the period under review as very recent research has shown.

Both Barrow and Despotopoulou consider the ways in which women's travel by rail was portrayed as being fraught with danger.<sup>49</sup> As their research suggests, although railways greatly increased the opportunity for mobility, confusion about the new public spaces of the railway meant that women were seen as being in danger from personal or sexual attack. By using the public space of the station, and particularly the more intimate space of the railway carriage, women were seen as undermining the ideology of gendered domesticity which sited them in the private space of the home. As Despotopoulou writes: 'Although the train may have been conceived of as an integrated space in which men and women carry out the shared ordinary goal of transport, it was perceived, just as the street was, as a gendered masculine space in which women's presence was incongruous unless it conformed to the home-based values of patriarchal ideology.'<sup>50</sup> Barrow refers to the large number of newspaper articles about women's railway travel which were often presented in terms of dramatic moral panic and suggests that these were a reaction to the increasing number of women travelling, working and simply being visible outside of the private sphere of home. As he notes, 'the rhetorical sexualisation of women in print was a response to women's increasing presence in public spaces'<sup>51</sup> and he also highlights the railway carriage as a particular problem because of the close proximity in which men and women were confined without any means of escape, particularly in the early design of the Victorian railway carriage which had no corridor. Despotopoulou agrees, claiming that the design of the railway technology led to 'unavoidable intimacy' and cultivated 'a new custom of brief interaction amongst strangers in cramped spaces.'<sup>52</sup> Railway companies reacted to the concerns, often fuelled by a salacious press, about the potential dangers faced by women and many introduced 'Ladies Only' compartments. A Board of Trade enquiry was undertaken in 1887 into the provision of these compartments which indicated that, even when these

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<sup>49</sup> RJ Barrow, 'Rape on the Railway: Women, Safety and Moral Panic in Victorian Newspapers,' *Journal of Victorian Culture* 20:3 (2015), pp341-356, A Despotopoulou, *Women and the Railway*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>51</sup> Barrow, 'Rape on the Railway' p.342.

<sup>52</sup> Despotopoulou, *Women and the Railway*, p.31.

compartments were provided, they were not widely used.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, as Simmons points out, the issue for railway companies was double-edged because 'the dangers from which they tried to protect their women passengers were subtly advertised by each 'Ladies Only' label on the window of a compartment.'<sup>54</sup> Despotopoulou suggests that the issue was not about segregation but about the presence of women in traditional male space claiming that, despite the boundaries of first and second class and women-only compartments, 'these divisions seldom controlled or checked the disorderly circulation of bodies for it was the circulation itself which obliterated the boundary between inner and outer, private and public, and which made the system permeable and vulnerable.'<sup>55</sup> Women travellers challenged the masculinity of railway space and raised concerns about the constructions of gender which still permeated the ideological culture of the late-nineteenth century. As this section has suggested, women were moving in, and around, these masculine public spaces during the period under review and rail travel both facilitated and reflected their increased participation in travel, in paid employment, in education and in philanthropic work. Yet, the railway maintained its position as a masculine space, albeit one into which women became visitors for a specific purpose and for a limited time.

This section has shown how the class distinctions of late-Victorian Britain were replicated within the occupational, hierarchical divisions of railway employment and the thesis will explore the extent to which middle-class women within the Railway Mission may have used ideological notions of class and gender as forms of control with which to encourage railwaymen to adapt their behaviour in order to meet the expectations of middle-class, religious respectability. It will also consider whether women in the Railway Mission were able to use the hierarchical divisions of railway employment in their efforts to attract men to the Mission. It is possible, for example, that they may have encouraged senior men to influence their more junior workmates to attend Mission meetings and classes; equally, the women may have been able to utilise occupational divisions of railway work and community by having converted men persuade their workmates to become members of the Mission. This section has

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<sup>53</sup> Parliamentary Papers 1888 lxxix 97

<sup>54</sup> Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, p.334.

<sup>55</sup> Despotopoulou, *Women and the Railway*, p.39.

also discussed the growth of interest in trade unionism and in the development of secular activities and organisations which were open to railwaymen in the late-nineteenth century and the thesis will explore the many ways in which women working for the Railway Mission tried to attract the men to their meetings during this period of increasingly political and secular opportunity and activity.

Finally, this section has also shown how, despite the substantial growth in the railway network with a corresponding increase in the opportunities for employment and travel, women remained marginal in the world of railway masculinity. This has provided a context for exploring the novelty of their work for the Railway Mission in the late-Victorian period. The thesis will discuss the ways in which women's contribution to, and involvement in, Railway Mission work was encouraged and it will examine the influencing factors and conditions which simultaneously made them welcome in one railway environment whilst marginalising them in others. The thesis will also take a new approach to the study of women and the railway. The work undertaken by both Matheson and Wojtczak has focused on women as railway employees whilst Despotopoulpu and Barrow have considered women as consumers. This thesis will add an additional dimension to this existing research by undertaking a new and innovative look at the relationships between Victorian railwaymen and the women who occupied railway space as missionaries rather than as employees or consumers. This section, in its exploration of the cogent aspects of railway culture during the years under review, has provided a contextual background to the main area of research into women's work with railwaymen as part of the Railway Mission during the first twenty years of the organisation. The next section will add to this contextualisation by examining contemporaneous developments in religious culture and it will enhance the earlier section on religious historiography through a focused consideration of the religious initiatives of the late-Victorian period. It will also provide an insight into some of the organisations which were competing with the Railway Mission both to influence, and to gain support from, the working classes of the late-nineteenth century.

## Part 2: Aspects of Religious Culture 1881-1901

The previous section has shown the extent to which the railway had become an integral and significant part of late-Victorian society. Religion has a longer history than that of the railway and the outward signs of religious culture were visible long before the Victorian period. By the second half of the nineteenth century, however, the visibility of religion was becoming even more significant and, by the 1880s and 1890s, its ubiquity could be compared to that of the railway. Henry Walker's contemporary description of religious provision in East London in 1896 clearly illustrates and exemplifies the large number of churches, chapels and mission halls and the wide-ranging nature of religious activity in the late-nineteenth century<sup>56</sup> and McLeod's description of religion in the late-Victorian period as 'pervasive Christianity'<sup>57</sup> paints a vivid picture of the increase in, and changing nature of, religion at this time. He describes the massive building programme, often fuelled by sectarian competition, which led to the large numbers, and diverse nature, of religious buildings and which, as in the case of the railway, meant that religion had become both highly visible and accessible.<sup>58</sup> Not only did sectarian competition lead to a profusion of churches and chapels in the landscape but also to increased cultural change and greater activity in religious practice. Brown refers to a 'Salvation Industry'<sup>59</sup> whilst Brooks describes 'missions, revivals, and Salvationist crusades, dedicated priests and ministers, clergymen's wives, sisterhoods, laymen and laywomen.'<sup>60</sup> This escalation of, and diversification in, religious activity and provision was aimed at the working classes who were considered, particularly by those in the middle class, to be in need of redemption through evangelical intervention. Change in religious culture during the period under review also reflected social and economic change as religious organisations sought to persuade working people to use their additional leisure time in the pursuit of religion. New types of protagonists were required to lead this change and McLeod describes the emergence, in the 1880s and

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<sup>56</sup> H Walker, *East London: Sketches of Christian Work and Workers* (London: The Religious Tract Society, 1896).

<sup>57</sup> H McLeod, *Religion and Society in England 1850-1914*, (London: St Martin's Press, 1996), p.71.

<sup>58</sup> *Ibid*, p.72.

<sup>59</sup> CG Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain* (London: Routledge, 2001).

<sup>60</sup> C Brooks & A Saint, *The Victorian Church. Architecture and Society* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1995), p.22.

the 1890s, of 'a new style of clergyman' and of 'the slum priest,'<sup>61</sup> both working to create greater allegiance between the working classes and organised religion. Evangelism in the late-nineteenth century involved less formality with, for example, the advent of small chapels and mission halls where the respectability of Sunday dress was considered less important than in the established Anglican church and where there were fewer financial obligations in the pew rental and subscription costs of more middle-class religious arrangements. The Railway Mission was able to differentiate itself from some other religious organisations in its wide-scale building of Mission Halls and this was, according to Mr G.H. Turner, General Manager of the Midland Railway, one of the features which attracted railwaymen to the Railway Mission. In a ceremony to mark the laying of the memorial stone in the Railway Mission Hall in Nottingham in 1894, he, somewhat patronisingly, said: 'Many men were kept away from more imposing buildings because they could not go in frock coats and top hats. This had been a great barrier. He knew that many men liked to go where they could feel comfortable and enjoy the simple language spoken to them.'<sup>62</sup>

Evangelism in this period saw an increased enthusiasm for open-air meetings, preaching in the streets and the publication and widespread distribution of religious tracts. Religious organisations extended their activities to include sporting clubs, women's groups, excursions and picnics and 'church socials with singing and dancing that were patently not religious though they were emphatically decorous and respectable.'<sup>63</sup> Evangelists became more involved in visiting the poor and the sick and 'opened up the working-class home.'<sup>64</sup> These evangelical visitors, the majority of whom were women, worked in a more organised way during the late-Victorian period, often working in teams to cover working-class neighbourhoods, they read from the Bible, gave out religious tracts, sang hymns and tried to persuade adults and children to attend Church and Sunday School services and classes.

As noted in the Introduction to this thesis, the Salvation Army is perhaps the best known religious organisation of the late-Victorian period which, in line with the

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<sup>61</sup> McLeod, *Religion and Society in England*, p.18.

<sup>62</sup> *Nottinghamshire Guardian* 25 April 1894.

<sup>63</sup> McLeod, *Religion and Society in England*, p.252.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid*, p.46.

Railway Mission, aimed specifically to attract working-class allegiance and support. It was, as Walker suggests, 'a neighbourhood religion' with a 'battle plan that was especially suited to urban working-class geography and cultural life.'<sup>65</sup> It was also an organisation in which women, as both Walker and Eason have shown, had a significant role. In contrast to the women of the Railway Mission, many had working-class backgrounds and the 'Hallelujah Lasses,' as they became known, were a common sight in working-class areas. Their uniform made them easily identifiable as they 'proceeded through the streets – singing, stopping to pray and to preach – they used their bodies, costumes, musical instruments, song lyrics and the spoken word to convey their messages.'<sup>66</sup> They transgressed the boundaries of public and private space as they worked to convert the working-class communities of the industrial towns and cities of late-Victorian Britain. The Salvation Army enjoyed rapid growth and, by 1884, as the Railway Mission was also trying to establish itself in these working-class communities, the Salvation Army had 1,644 officers and 637 mission stations.<sup>67</sup> In contrast to the Railway Mission which initially relied heavily on middle-class women's voluntary work, the Salvation Army offered working-class women unprecedented opportunities for employment. There is a dramatic contrast between the image of the 'Hallelujah Lass' as she marched along the streets singing and preaching and the image conjured up by the Mission's idealised 'Miss Go-Ahead,' who, as noted in the Introduction to this thesis, was required to be 'womanly, modest, nervous and quiet.'<sup>68</sup>

The religious culture of the late-nineteenth century also saw other attempts, similar to those made by the Railway Mission, to attract certain sectors of working-class industrialised society by targeting occupational groups. Brown refers to the establishment of the Soldiers' Bible Union in 1878, an organisation, led by Miss M.S. Herdman, specialising in the evangelism of soldiers<sup>69</sup> whilst, in the same year, the Christian Police Association was founded.<sup>70</sup> Two years earlier, in 1876, the Sailors' Rest, an organisation founded for sailors by Agnes Weston had opened its first home

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<sup>65</sup> P Walker, *Pulling the Devil's Kingdom Down. The Salvation Army in Victorian Britain*, (London: University of California Press, 2001), p.2.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid*, p.132.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid*, p.1.

<sup>68</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1888 p.209.

<sup>69</sup> Brown, *The Death of Christian Britain*, p.47.

<sup>70</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* 12 December 1888.

which provided accommodation as well as religious, temperance, educational and leisure activities.<sup>71</sup> The Railway Mission appears to have followed this trend of evangelising male working-class occupational groups through the efforts of women but there appears to have been an important difference between the Railway Mission and other religious organisations of the same period, even those which catered exclusively for other male workforces. Both the Sailors' Rest and the Christian Police Association provided accommodation for their members along with catering, educational and recreational facilities. The Christian Police Institute in London which opened in May 1889 had 'a refreshment room, a publishing room, a large classroom, a bright and cheerful reading room supplied with papers, books, games and stationery for letter writing'<sup>72</sup> and the Sailor's Rest opened by Agnes Weston in May 1876 had a 'refreshment bar, dormitories, baths, smoking, dining, reading rooms, billiard room etc.'<sup>73</sup> Membership of the Railway Mission appears to have been a much more serious affair: no ancillary facilities seem to have been provided and there was little, if any, scope for recreation. The emphasis seems instead to have focused on serious and sustained religion. Even in the Railway Mission Convalescent Homes where the men went to relax and recuperate after illness or accident, they were required to 'conform with the rules and comply with the wishes of the Lady Superintendent.' They were expressly forbidden, at the risk of expulsion, from gambling, smoking, entering a public house, holding any kind of raffle or having an 'improper conversation or conversing with the female servants.' Attendance at morning and evening daily prayers was mandatory as was the requirement to attend a place of worship for Sunday morning and evening service.<sup>74</sup> Life in the Railway Mission appears to have reflected evangelism in its strictest form with little room for leisure, pleasure or any activity which did not involve the pursuit of worthy religion or religious learning.

The late-nineteenth century was a period during which large numbers of women became involved in religious and philanthropic work in a variety of ways. Mangion, in her research into Catholic 'women religious,' points to the widespread development of 'nineteenth-century sisterhoods, convents and deaconess institutions' noting that,

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<sup>71</sup> A Weston, *My Life Among the Blue Jackets*, (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1909), p.108.

<sup>72</sup> *Yorkshire Herald and York Herald* 2 June 1890.

<sup>73</sup> A Weston, *My Life Among the Blue Jackets*, p.109.

<sup>74</sup> Convalescent Home Rules in RM Annual Report 1897 RM/MISS/1/5/1.

‘by the 1860s, Catholic and Anglican sisters as well as Protestant deaconesses had become a powerful and visible force as evangelists and philanthropists.’<sup>75</sup> Whilst the Railway Mission, unlike many other contemporary religious organisations, appears not to have involved itself in direct forms of philanthropy, the wide-scale involvement of women in charitable work is important since it formed part of the religious culture of the late-Victorian period and part of the social and cultural environment in which women working for the Railway Mission created space and built networks. Unlike the male domination of railway culture in the late-nineteenth century, women occupied prime position numerically in the world of religious, charitable and philanthropic benevolence. Large numbers of women worked for the Railway Mission during the period under review but, despite their numerical superiority, they did not enjoy any significant levels of control or power. As the thesis will discuss, women did achieve some level of influence, particularly at local and regional level, but this did not appear to extend to any positions in the upper echelons of the organisation where there was male exclusivity throughout the period under review. This pattern was repeated elsewhere and reflected contemporary ideologies about women’s familial and domestic roles. Their work for religious and charitable organisations was often seen as an extension of these traditional roles and women, particularly those from the middle classes, ‘were encouraged to cultivate their godliness in domesticity.’<sup>76</sup> Women became an integral and significant part of the religious culture of late-Victorian Britain for a number of reasons. Prochaska points to a reshaping of relationships between the sexes and suggests that social and cultural change encouraged women to ‘alter and expand their routine’ and to ‘develop their sense of mission’ and he refers particularly to wealthy middle-class women who had time on their hands and were able to donate to, and raise funds for, religious and philanthropic work.<sup>77</sup> He also explores the many ways in which women contributed to, and sometimes shaped the nature of, late-nineteenth century philanthropy.<sup>78</sup> Philanthropy, he suggests, gave women a ‘reflection of virtue and an escape from

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<sup>75</sup> Mangion, CM, ‘Women, Religious Ministry and Female Institution Building,’ in *Women, Gender and Religious Culture in Britain 1800-1940*, Chapter 4. See also Mangion, CM, *Contested Identities: Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008).

<sup>76</sup> S Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914. A Social History*, (London: Weidenfield and Nicholson, 2004), p.134

<sup>77</sup> F Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1980), p.1.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, see Chapter Two for a discussion on women as financial contributors and Chapter Three on women’s work in working-class homes and charitable institutions.

boredom.<sup>79</sup> Feelings of frustration and boredom were commonly expressed in women's diary records during the late-nineteenth century. Beatrice Webb, the well-known social philanthropist and daughter of Richard Potter, chairman of the Great Western Railway Company wrote in her diary entry in March 1883, that she felt like 'a caged animal bound up by the luxury, comfort and respectability of my position'<sup>80</sup> while the seventeen-year-old Agnes Weston describes how she struggled to know what to do with her life.<sup>81</sup> Duty and responsibility also dictated the pattern of life for many Victorian women; the young Beatrice Potter was required to look after mother during her frequent illnesses while Agnes Weston only felt able to continue her religious work with sailors because her unmarried sister and her brother and sister-in-law were able to share the care of her invalid mother following the death of her father in 1874.<sup>82</sup> Other research suggests that women's involvement in philanthropy was much more than a cure for boredom. Richardson and Twells, for example, argue that philanthropy provided women with an opportunity to shape their world, a deliberate political engagement through which they gained identity and influence, particularly in their local communities.<sup>83</sup> Possible reasons for women taking up work with the Railway Mission will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The perceptions of women's suitability for, and their experience of, charitable and philanthropic work created wider opportunities in the late-Victorian period. As already noted, during this time, many women were seeking employment opportunities and there was a gradual and subtle move from voluntary charitable work to paid employment within the embryonic professionalization of social work and into areas of local authority work deemed suitable for women. Steinbach notes how women were appointed to School Boards to oversee the management and administration of local elementary schools; she also points to women working in housing management, in the operation of the Poor Law and as factory inspectors.<sup>84</sup> Webb similarly charts a move from philanthropy based on, and formed around, religion to a more secular

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<sup>79</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy*, p.222.

<sup>80</sup> C Seymour Jones, *Beatrice Webb. Woman of Conflict*, (London: Pandora, 1992), p.54.

<sup>81</sup> A Weston, *My Life with the Blue Jackets*, (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1909), Chapter Three.

<sup>82</sup> *Ibid*, p.98.

<sup>83</sup> S Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women. Gender and Politics in Nineteenth Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2003), A Twells, *The Civilising Mission and The English Middle Class 1792-1850* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009).

<sup>84</sup> Steinbach, *Women in England*, pp.68-72.

approach. In his study of the origins of social work in the late-Victorian period, he suggests that, 'modernist conceptions of *social benevolence and active citizenship for the good of society* increasingly took precedence over religious notions of faith and duty in forming early social work.'<sup>85</sup> Howse found a similar experience in her study of rural district nursing in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries. She also cites the 1880s and 1890s 'as a period of political and social reform' and one 'during which the formation and establishment of the national system of district nursing took place' suggesting that there was a 'growing awareness that the material conditions of the poor were as essential a part of paternalism as the salvation of the soul.'<sup>86</sup> She, as other research has suggested, claims that these changes offered women 'a unique opportunity to redefine their own role and expand their lives beyond the limited role prescribed for them by the cult of domesticity by the "professionalization of philanthropy"'<sup>87</sup> The change from voluntary work to paid employment was significant in its acknowledgment of the value of women's work and in the validation of their move out of the home to an active role in the wider economic arena. The impact of women beginning to take up paid work with the Railway Mission will be discussed in Chapter 4.

The 1880s and 1890s also saw an escalation in the growth of, and interest in, overseas mission work. This was related to, and coincided with, the growth of Empire and interest in foreign countries and peoples. The latter part of the nineteenth century was also a period of increasing opportunity for foreign travel and the growth of extensive railway networks, both in Britain and overseas, was fundamental to this extended mobility. Railway and telegraph networks also facilitated better forms of communication so that knowledge of the world outside the United Kingdom was not limited to those who could travel but was widely available in newspapers, books and journals. Evangelists had therefore, by the late-nineteenth century, gained another large target in the indigenous 'heathens' abroad as they sought to spread their message of redemption and salvation and they were eager to take up the challenge. Midgley shows how women were involved in the overseas

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<sup>85</sup> SA Webb, 'The Comfort of Strangers: Social Work, Modernity and late Victorian England Part 1', *European Journal of Social Work* 10.1 (2007), pp.48-49.

<sup>86</sup> C Howse, 'From Lady Bountiful to Lady Administrator: Women and the administration of rural district nursing in England 1880-1925,' *Women's History Review* 15:3 (2006), p.436.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid*, p.437.

mission movement in the early-nineteenth century by raising awareness of, and funds for, missionaries working overseas and she cites the period between 1858 and 1887 as the time when 'the societies began to recruit women in their own right'.<sup>88</sup> In her study of women's recruitment to the London Missionary Society between 1875 and 1900, Haggis refers to the professionalization of mission work as 'an essential aspect of the evangelical effort' which 'motivated the decision to recruit women missionaries within the organisational frameworks during the 1860s and 1870s'.<sup>89</sup> McLeod refers to the 1880s, and particularly the 1890s, as years of significant growth in the development of foreign missions with 1896 as the peak year for missionary recruitment.<sup>90</sup> The expansion of the opportunities which religious activity gave to women in the late-nineteenth century was reflected in the high number of women who became overseas missionaries in their own right because, although women had been involved in foreign missionary work earlier in the second half of the nineteenth century, it was generally as the wife or sister of a male missionary. In the 1880s and 1890s, women were appointed as 'professional' overseas missionaries without the need of a male consort. They often remained in a subordinate position to their male counterparts and their work was generally limited to the evangelisation of indigenous women and children but the viability of their role in foreign mission work did become acknowledged and accepted.<sup>91</sup> Detailed discussion of overseas mission work is beyond the scope of this thesis but it is worth noting that the Railway Mission did support foreign mission work and had a number of branches overseas.

The final aspect of late-nineteenth century culture linked to religion which is relevant to this study of the Railway Mission relates to the contemporary perceptions about the position of men. McLeod suggests that, in this period, there was an 'obsession with physical fitness, sport, character building and manliness'<sup>92</sup> and evangelists tapped into this trend by linking religion with masculine strength. Many evangelists

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<sup>88</sup> C Midgley, 'Can Women be Missionaries: Envisioning Female Agency in the early Nineteenth Century', *Journal of British Studies* Vol. 45 No.2 (2006), pp337-338.

<sup>89</sup> J Haggis, 'A Heart that has felt the love of God and longs for others to know it: conventions of gender, tensions of self and constructions of difference in offering to be a lady missionary' *Women's History Review* 7:2 (1998), p.172.

<sup>90</sup> McLeod, *Religion and Society*, p.145.

<sup>91</sup> For further information on women's foreign mission work in the late nineteenth century, see RA Semple, *Missionary Women. Gender, Professionalism and the Victorian Idea of Christian Mission* (Woodbridge, Suffolk: Boydell Press, 2003).

<sup>92</sup> McLeod, *Religion and Society*, p.150.

promoted the idea of manliness and physical prowess through the creation of football and cricket teams linked to religious organisations. They also used sport as a tool with which to attract young working-class men, a group whom they thought to be most at risk from moral danger and also a group for whom religion seemed to have little attraction. Sport, it was hoped, would provide a hook with which to catch this section of the male population. McLeod notes that, during the 1880s, just under a quarter of the football teams in Birmingham and Liverpool were connected to a religious organisation<sup>93</sup> while Royle describes the Methodist Wesley Chapel in York, built in the 1860s close to the city's railway station and railway workshops, as having two cricket teams and cycling and swimming clubs by the beginning of the twentieth century.<sup>94</sup> Agreement about positive connections between sport and evangelism was not universal and, in his study of sport and the YMCA in the North East, Garnham found conflicting views. By the late 1880s, he found that 'athletic and sporting activities were forming important and integral parts of the programmes' of the YMCA branches in Gateshead, South Shields and Sunderland<sup>95</sup> but opponents of sport claimed that it could encourage vanity in seeking approbation for physical prowess and the winning of medals; football, in particular, might lead to mixing with men of dubious character who could become a bad influence. Garnham also refers to concerns about links between sport and gambling; referring to the 1893 Annual General meeting of the YMCA, he notes that Lord Kinnaird, the organisation's president, had urged the men to deter from gambling and to reform football by example.<sup>96</sup> Lord Kinnaird was a well-known footballer, President of the Football Association and he also held leading roles in many religious philanthropic organisations including the Railway Mission.<sup>97</sup> His role in the Mission will be discussed further in the following section. At a more fundamental level, Garnham suggests that sport could be seen as detracting from the main aims of the YMCA, the teaching of the Gospel. In contrast, promoters of sporting activity claimed that it could attract those who would not normally attend religious groups and, in particular,

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<sup>93</sup> *Ibid*, p.151.

<sup>94</sup> E Royle, *Nonconformity in Nineteenth Century York* (York: University of York, Borthwick Paper No. 68. 1985), p.19.

<sup>95</sup> N Garnham, 'Both Praying and Playing: 'Muscular Christianity' and the YMCA in North East County Durham', *Journal of Social History* Vol. 35 No.2 (2001), p. 398.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid*, p.399.

<sup>97</sup> N. Fishwick, 'Kinnaird, Arthur Fitzgerald eleventh Lord Kinnaird of Inchture and third Baron Kinnaird of Rossie (1847- 1923)', <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50297> accessed 16 February 2016.

‘Muscular Christian teachers’ could ‘reach out to local boys through sport and then impart the Christian message.’<sup>98</sup> Evangelists also used the contemporary interest in foreign travel and exploration to promote an idealised correlation between religion and physical strength with expositions of brave Christian missionaries who combined religious authority with muscular manliness to bring Christianity to foreign heathens.

Religious culture and ideology thus formed a pervasive and integral part of the wider social and cultural environment of late-nineteenth century Britain. This was comparable to the influence of the railway as Freeman and Simmons, for example, have shown. Religion gave women opportunities for greater freedom and increased mobility, and religion, particularly evangelism, facilitated women’s movement out of middle-class domesticity and into the urban environment of working-class chapels, mission halls and homes. It provided a means for women to enter into a world which combined spiritual belief with practical activity for which they increasingly began to be paid. Evangelism facilitated cultural transitions between class and gender as women moved between their homes and their workplace, either as volunteers or paid workers, meeting and working with working-class men and women whilst simultaneously being involved in the social networks of middle-class religious philanthropy through which they organised and promoted their evangelical activities. The increased opportunity for spatial mobility in the late-nineteenth century was fundamental to the success of contemporary religious culture. Women were able to use the well-developed transport systems of the late-Victorian period to carry out their religious and philanthropic work and the thesis will consider the ways in which they used local and national transport systems in their work for the Railway Mission.

The religious culture of the late-nineteenth century encompassed a much broader public domain than the traditional church of the earlier period. It had become a culture which transcended class, gender, social, regional and international boundaries and it gave women much greater access to, and mobility between, the physical and social spatial divisions of the late-Victorian period. This research will explore the extent to which women in the Railway Mission combined family responsibilities with their work for the Mission. In particular, it will explore women’s

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<sup>98</sup> *Ibid*, p.401.

movement beyond the relatively safe environment of work with women and children as they moved into the noisy, dirty and essentially masculine world of the late-Victorian railway industry. This will offer a fresh perspective onto the separate spheres debate by showing how female middle-class Railway Mission leaders mixed with working-class railwaymen. This suggests that the strict division between public and private spaces could not be maintained given the mobility of middle-class missionary women between the middle-class home, the working-class home and the railway workplace. It will also suggest that there was a subversion of both class and gender divisions when working-class railwaymen were invited to, and entertained in, the homes and gardens of middle-class women.

As this section has shown, religious culture in this period also involved international travel with increasing numbers of female missionaries working abroad. Reports of their work opened up notions of cultural space as the British public became aware of the different social and religious practices of other countries, often through personal accounts from overseas missionaries. The Railway Mission, in line with other religious organisations, increasingly used overseas missionary work as a topic for its branch meetings, both to attract people and also as a way of raising additional funds for further foreign missionary endeavour. The thesis will explore the extent to which the Railway Mission followed, or adapted, the practices of other contemporaneous religious organisations. It will also explore the possibility that work with the Railway Mission may have provided an introduction to, and experience of, mission work for women who wanted to take up the work overseas during this period of missionary expansion and professionalization.

Finally, as this section has shown, perceptions of manliness and Christianity took on a new importance during the late-nineteenth century and the thesis will explore the ways in which the Railway Mission may have adopted the ideology of muscular Christianity to promote the notion of the idealised railwayman of the late-nineteenth century, physically strong, handsome, disciplined, religious, ideally teetotal, and, if not, reliably sober. As a railwayman, he would be responsible, not for the foreign heathens in whom there was such interest in the late-Victorian period, but for the safety and well-being of his rail passengers, railway property and his railway workmates in addition to his traditional responsibilities towards his family. As the

previous sections have suggested, the idealised railwayman would be loyal to his railway company and to God: both would provide the framework and fabric of his life and he would be answerable to both. The late-nineteenth century, as this section has discussed, was one of significant change in, and expansion of, religious activity and practice; it also coincided with the period during which the Railway Mission tried to establish itself as a successful and creditable religious organisation. The next section will consider the early years of its development as it sought to create space for itself amongst the plethora of religious institutions of the late-Victorian period.

### **Part 3: The Railway Mission 1881-1901**

The final part of the chapter will give an overview of the Railway Mission during the years 1881-1901. It will concentrate on the origins and aims of the organisation, its growth and development during the period under review and the activities which it provided for the railwaymen of late-Victorian Britain. It will also briefly consider how far the ways in which the Mission developed during the period under review may have differentiated it from other contemporaneous religious organisations and how far similarities may also be found between the Mission and other religious provision of the late-nineteenth century.

### **Railway Mission Aims and Origins**

As the previous sections have shown, social, economic and cultural change during the second half of the nineteenth century led to more clearly defined working-class identities and the railway industry is important in providing an excellent example of an almost self-contained, working-class workforce and community. As noted in the first Part of this chapter, it was also a workforce which, by the end of the nineteenth century, was beginning to involve itself in trade union activism. Many working-class men ignored, or excluded themselves from, the middle-class domination of organised religious life. Middle-class evangelicals, in particular, were thus concerned to raise working-class interest in, and allegiance to, recognised religious practice. The Railway Mission, formed in 1881, aimed to take religion to the vast numbers of men employed in the late-Victorian railway industry whose working hours often precluded them from attending regular Sunday services. Railwaymen were seen as

a special case and a special cause. The aims of the Mission are clearly described by Bullivant in his article in the Great Eastern Railway Company magazine:

‘To preach the Gospel to the employees of all lines by means of experienced Evangelists holding Special Missions

To establish local branches for united Christian fellowship and aggressive Gospel effort

To advocate the cause of Temperance, the care of the sick and injured and the moral and social welfare of all grades

The circulation of good and wholesome literature among railwaymen’<sup>99</sup>

No formal documentation appears to have been drawn up regarding the Mission’s structure which largely seems to have evolved with time. At the first committee meeting of the Railway Mission held on 14 November 1881, the committee resolved to form the Mission ‘from a merger with the Railway Boys’ Mission’ with its clearly stated objective as ‘the moral and spiritual advancement of railway employees of all ages.’<sup>100</sup> It is not clear whether this involved a merger from an existing organisation or whether it was decided to simply take over the Railway Boys’ Mission. No further information regarding this decision is given. The Railway Boys’ Mission had grown from philanthropic work undertaken in 1874 by Eliot Walton who had befriended boys employed in London by the London and South Western Railway Company. He was concerned about their moral and spiritual welfare, claiming that ‘when work is over, the boys congregate together in the streets and not having anyone to care for their moral good, their condition, speaking generally, is of a most painful description.’<sup>101</sup> As a result, he felt ‘obliged to form two classes together of about 50 for general and religious instruction’<sup>102</sup> at his home. A room was subsequently rented in Vauxhall and was open every evening for ‘recreation and suitable games.’ Later, a further room was used as a Reading Room with a Lending Library. The Railway Boys’ Mission then had 110 names on its register. A leaflet, written to publicise the work of the Boys’ Mission, provides an interesting summary of the activities available which are summarised below:

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<sup>99</sup> J Bullivant, ‘The Railway Mission’ in the *Great Eastern Railway Magazine* Vol 11 (1912), pp. 390-391.

<sup>100</sup> RM Minutes 14 November 1881 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>101</sup> Railway Boys’ Mission leaflet, circa 1876, author unknown RM/MISS/1/14/1.

<sup>102</sup> Ibid.

Sunday: Bible Class, Prayer Meeting, Gospel Service  
Monday: Industrial Work and Recreation, Band Practice, Singing Class  
Tuesday: Savings Bank and Library, Industrial Work and Recreation, Lectures, Bible Class  
Wednesday: Educational Class  
Thursday: Industrial Work and Recreation  
Friday: Industrial Work and Recreation, Band Practice, Singing Class  
Saturday: Prayer Meeting<sup>103</sup>

A newspaper report of the Annual General Meeting of the Railway Boys' Mission in 1880, at which Dr Thomas Barnardo, the well-known instigator of children's homes was a speaker, indicates that the activities included 'carpentry, model and frame making and wood turning' in addition to religious activities and gives the objective of the Mission as keeping the boys safe and providing them with 'honest employment in their leisure hours and to keep them from the vast amount of bad literature now afloat.'<sup>104</sup> The newspaper article claimed that there were 1700 boys aged 13-18 employed on the London and South Western, the London, Chatham and Dover and the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Companies and that there had been a large increase in the number of boys in the Mission to 162 members.<sup>105</sup> Although the article implied that there had been a significant and very satisfactory growth in the number of members of the Railway Boys' Mission, these figures indicate that membership was, in fact, less than ten per cent of the number of boys employed by these three railway companies.

Eliot Walton, the instigator of the Railway Boys' Mission, was a well-known speaker on religious and spiritual matters. In the early years of the Railway Mission, he was one of the national committee members who toured the country to raise interest in the establishment of Railway Mission branches. The *Northern Echo*, for example, reported that he visited Darlington in 1892 following which a committee was

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<sup>103</sup> Ibid.

<sup>104</sup> *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 26 April 1880.

<sup>105</sup> *Aberdeen Weekly Journal* 26 April 1880.

established and a branch opened.<sup>106</sup> He is also reported to have conducted missions at Stamford between 2 and 12 March 1895<sup>107</sup> and to have held a successful mission at Crewe over the Easter period in the same year where ‘on Good Friday, a tea meeting was held when about 240 sat down.’ Following the tea, a public meeting was held at which ‘Mr Walton gave a stirring address.’<sup>108</sup> In 1898, however, after seventeen years with the Railway Mission, the executive committee asked for the resignation of Eliot Walton following ‘unsatisfactory conduct while engaged in conducting a special mission.’<sup>109</sup> No further information was given but it was noted that the 44-year-old bachelor resigned immediately.<sup>110</sup> Walton was later appointed as Secretary to the Racing Stables Institute<sup>111</sup> but he appears to have had no further active role within the Railway Mission following his resignation although census records indicate that, in 1909, he married Anne Backhouse, the superintendent of the Preston branch of the Railway Mission.<sup>112</sup> Following their marriage, however, the couple moved to Newmarket where, in the census for 1911, Walton was shown as the Superintendent of the Racing Stables Mission.<sup>113</sup>

## Early Mission Leadership

The executive committee of the Railway Mission comprised a wealthy philanthropic network of men involved in a number of religious and philanthropic organisations. At the first meeting held in November 1881, Edward Denny, Thomas Anthony Denny, Hon. A F Kinnaird, James Matheson, Samuel Gurney Shepherd and Walton were noted as forming the initial national committee: other men present at the meeting included Thomas Pelham and Albert Head whose wife Caroline, as Chapter 4 will discuss, was also involved in Railway Mission work. These men generally held a number of charitable positions. Thomas Denny, for example, an Irish businessman, who was active in the Railway Mission from its inception until his death in 1909, was also a senior member of the Salvation Army. He and Lady Hope, a well-known

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<sup>106</sup> *Northern Echo* 13 April 1892.

<sup>107</sup> *The Railway Signal* March 1895 p.41.

<sup>108</sup> *The Railway Signal* April 1895 p.98.

<sup>109</sup> RM Minutes 25 January 1898 RM/MISS/1/2/2.

<sup>110</sup> RM Minutes 15 February 1898 RM/MISS/1/2/2

<sup>111</sup> <http://www.ancestry.co.uk>.

<sup>112</sup> <http://www.ancestry.co.uk>.

<sup>113</sup> 1911 Census.

speaker and author of moral pamphlets and booklets, were frequent speakers at charitable and philanthropic events, as well as at Railway Mission meetings. Lady Hope, who married Denny in 1893, spoke at organisations such as the East London Women's Christian Union,<sup>114</sup> the Birmingham Ladies Temperance Association,<sup>115</sup> and the NSPCC in Cardiff.<sup>116</sup> Lady Hope, who had no active role in the Railway Mission, focused on temperance, religion, morality and respectability in her pamphlets and speeches with a strong emphasis on class. At a conference of temperance women, for example, she spoke of the 'necessity of going among the working classes' upon whom 'the higher classes of society depended greatly for their food and clothing.'<sup>117</sup> McKenna points, somewhat scathingly, to the similarities which she made between domestic and railway servants when she urged the higher classes of society to take an interest in both.<sup>118</sup>

Railway Mission executives also held senior business and/or political roles as well as charitable positions and there is a suggestion of a 'Gentlemen's Club' both in the background to, and the network of, the philanthropic organisations with which they became involved. Lord Kinnaid, for example, who was on the Railway Mission national committee throughout the period under review, was a director of Barclay's Bank as well as having approximately twenty presidencies and over forty vice-presidencies of voluntary organisations.<sup>119</sup> These included the YWCA, the YMCA, the Church Missionary Society, the London City Mission, the Boys Brigade and the Boy Scouts. He came from a well-known religious philanthropic family: his mother had founded, and his sisters were active in, the YWCA. Kinnaid, along with Thomas Pelham, a fellow committee member of the Railway Mission whom he met at Eton, founded the Homes for Working Boys.<sup>120</sup> Newspaper articles illustrate the networking between these men. *The Graphic*, for example, reports on the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary meeting of Dr Barnardo's Homes for Orphan Waifs when, 'amongst those on the platform were James Matheson, S G Shephard, T W Pelham, T A

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<sup>114</sup> *Daily News* 19 April 1887.

<sup>115</sup> *Birmingham Daily Post* 21 March 1888.

<sup>116</sup> *Western Mail* 29 June 1899.

<sup>117</sup> *Manchester Times* 12 October 1878.

<sup>118</sup> McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, pp. 45-46.

<sup>119</sup> N. Fishwick, Kinnaid, Arthur Fitzgerald <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50297>, accessed 16 February 2016.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*

Denny and Lady Hope,<sup>121</sup> all Railway Mission committee members except, of course, Lady Hope. Her name, however, was often included amongst the speakers or prominent guests at these types of events. Samuel Gurney Shephard was a director of the London & Life Assurance Co. as well as being Chairman of the Mid Wales Railway Company.<sup>122</sup> In addition to the Railway Boys' and the Railway Missions, he was involved with Barnardo's Homes for many years acting, for example, as Chairman in an appeal for funds to celebrate the 21<sup>st</sup> year of the organisation with, notably, Lord Kinnaid, James Matheson and Thomas Barnardo as Trustees.<sup>123</sup> Similarly, Matheson, Secretary of the Presbyterian Church, and Shephard were committee members of the National Temperance League.<sup>124</sup>

These wealthy and influential men were able to give time, money and credibility to the organisations with which they were involved. They were also able to offer business acumen and an evangelical commitment exemplified by their actions which, sometimes, went beyond attendance at committee meetings and Mission events. Shephard, for example, offered his estate at Potter's Bar for a conference of railway workers in 1883.<sup>125</sup> The class structure of wider society was clearly replicated in the Railway Mission and was neatly encapsulated in the following report about Lady Hope who was a frequent speaker at Mission events for a long period, attending, for example, an early meeting in Derby in 1884<sup>126</sup> and, some twelve years later, the opening of the Railway Mission Hall at Horsham (see Fig. 3). The report summarised the tenor of her approach as 'stimulating those of the well-to-do classes to join in a variety of beneficent efforts to raise and relieve the poor and to guide the dissipated into better habits and higher thoughts.'<sup>127</sup>

Mission rhetoric and activity was tightly controlled and the executive committee oversaw decision making at both local and national level. Branches were required to affiliate to the national body and to follow the directives of the Mission executive. In Leeds, for example, 'a committee of (local) gentlemen' arranged to buy a hall with an

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<sup>121</sup> *Daily Graphic* 20 June 1896.

<sup>122</sup> *Bristol Mercury* 17 August 1874.

<sup>123</sup> *Pall Mall Gazette* 27 April 1887.

<sup>124</sup> *Hampshire Telegraph & Sussex Chronicle* 8 January 1881.

<sup>125</sup> RM Minute 25 April 1883 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>126</sup> *Derby Mercury* 27 February 1884.

<sup>127</sup> *Glasgow Herald* 13 May 1880.

adjoining residential property which had been used by the local Mission branch.<sup>128</sup> This was achieved with the approval and permission of the national committee which then took responsibility for arranging 'the conditions on which the local missionary would reside in the house'<sup>129</sup> and, three months later, 'appointed on trial for six months a Bible woman in connection with the Leeds branch.'<sup>130</sup> This type of executive decision making was not restricted to the engagement of Mission personnel. In 1889, for example, the committee refused a request from a Mr Spring of Gloucester 'for the Lord's Supper to be partaken in the Railway Mission Hall'<sup>131</sup> and also rejected a later request from railway trade union members in Swindon to hold meetings in the local Mission Hall.<sup>132</sup> The tone, nature and control exercised by this upper-class executive remained the same throughout the period under review.

### **The Railway Mission Christian Association (RMCA)**

Initial growth of the Mission was rapid with 270 branches operating in 1901.<sup>133</sup> There was no facility for individual membership of the Railway Mission until 1884, only local branch affiliation to the national organisation. From 1884, individual membership could be achieved by joining the Railwaymen's Christian Association which, by 1890, had been renamed the Railway Mission Christian Association (RMCA). Membership of the RMCA was only open to railwaymen; women, even those who worked in the Railway Mission, were not allowed full membership although they were able to become auxiliary members. Details of RMCA members were given in the organisation's Annual Handbooks and Reports; men were listed under the name of the Mission branch to which they were affiliated with their railway occupation also being shown. Where men of more than one railway company attended a Mission branch, they were also grouped under the name of their company and these divisions both reflected and reinforced the railway-company occupational divisions discussed in the previous section. Women were listed as auxiliary members underneath the names of the men; they were generally women who worked in, or who supported, the Mission and sometimes included railwaymen's

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<sup>128</sup> RM Minute 5 April 1893 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid.

<sup>130</sup> RM Minute 7 June 1893 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>131</sup> RM Minute 19 June 1889 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>132</sup> RM Minute 13 November 1890 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>133</sup> RM Confidential memo 1945 RM/MISS/1/19/1.

wives. Occasionally, the list might also show the name of a man who was involved with the Mission, perhaps as a speaker or as the husband or brother of a woman worker. The objectives of the RMCA give an insight into the nature of the organisation:

‘To unite all Railwaymen who love and regard the Lord Jesus Christ as their Saviour  
To strengthen their desires to be His disciples in their life and doctrine  
To associate all their efforts for the extension of His Kingdom among Railwaymen of all grades and classes.’<sup>134</sup>

Membership of the Railway Mission was a serious matter and, as the objectives make clear, men needed to have been converted in order to join the RMCA. Auxiliary members similarly had to commit to Christianity. ‘The *Christian* wife of any Railway worker and any worker in the Railway Mission could become an auxiliary member’ and all RMCA members, including auxiliary members, were required to ‘profess that they believe in Jesus and follow Him in their lives.’<sup>135</sup> Conformity in other areas of life was also an integral part of RMCA membership. Temperance, although not a pre-requisite to membership, was highly desirable as was the ability to defer from the ungodly habits of smoking and gambling. RMCA membership also gave the men responsibility for converting their workmates and they were encouraged, not only to take them to Mission meetings, but also to persuade them to Christianity whilst they were at work.

The message for the unconverted was stark, uncompromising, demanding of personal change and pointed. ‘You are earnestly urged to accept Christ as YOUR Saviour and enter His service - - - You are now on the down line leading to endless misery – the danger signal is up. STOP! CHANGE! Take a FREE ticket and get on the UP train to HEAVEN.’<sup>136</sup> The use of capital letters for emphasis was intended to create on paper the power of the oratory of the large-scale meetings held by the Mission whilst the use of railway terminology with the ‘up’ and ‘down’ lines, the ‘signal’ and the ‘ticket’ aimed to engage with the men through the use of the

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<sup>134</sup> RM Annual Report 1891, p.179 RM/MISS/1/5/1

<sup>135</sup> Ibid.

<sup>136</sup> RMCA Annual Report 1891, p.181 RM/MISS/1/5/1.

everyday, workplace language with which they were familiar. Membership of the RMCA required much more of a commitment than simply attending Mission meetings. The need to meet the norms of religious respectability and the need to conform to accepted patterns of behaviour was similar to those demanded of the men in their everyday work. Such conformity was also required to become an accepted member of the RMCA and, thereby, of the Railway Mission. For some men, this may have been part of an ordered, respectable life; for others, it may have been yet another imposition upon, and intrusion into, their personal lives.

### **The Growth and Development of the Railway Mission**

Reports of continued growth in the numbers of Mission members and in the number of branches were common in the early years of development. In 1885, for example, a newspaper report of the Mission's second annual conference claimed that the Mission had '81 Mission stations' with the Secretary, George Clarke, reporting that 'the amazing growth of the Railway Mission had far exceeded the most sanguine expectations of the committee.'<sup>137</sup> Two years later, 278 weekly meetings at 135 centres were reported increasing to 400 weekly meetings and 189 centres by 1887. The report claimed that over 1,000 men had joined the Mission during 1887 giving a total membership of 5,000 and an estimate that '80,000 of the 387,000 railway employees in the United Kingdom were reached by the Mission'.<sup>138</sup> A recent history of the Railway Mission shows that the Mission had 767 members at 84 locations in 1884 and that significant growth meant that, by 1890, there were 6,000 members at about 200 locations in 1890.<sup>139</sup> The picture portrayed, despite the somewhat contradictory numerical evidence, is one of rapid and continued development in this early period so that, by 1897, the first year for which an annual report is available, the Mission claimed to have established 400 branches since its inception with 50,000 meetings having been 'held for Railway people in the last twelve months.'<sup>140</sup> These apparent numerical discrepancies appear to suggest that some branches were failing as others were being formed. It may also be explained by an element of journalistic licence as Railway Mission rhetoric was based on success rather than

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<sup>137</sup> *Daily News* 7 May 1885.

<sup>138</sup> *The Times* 18 May 1887.

<sup>139</sup> *A Short History of the Railway Mission* RM/MISS/1/9/19.

<sup>140</sup> RM Annual Report 1897, p.2 RM/MISS/1/5/1.

failure. It is also important to put these statistics in perspective: allegiance to the Railway Mission was numerically low when compared to the tens of thousands of men working in the late-Victorian railway industry. This remained the case throughout the period under review.<sup>141</sup>

One of the Mission's main successes was the way in which it was able to develop into a national organisation within a fairly short period of time. Details of the development of the Railway Mission are drawn primarily from Railway Mission Guides and Annual Reports, RMCA handbooks and from the Railway Mission monthly publication, the *Railway Signal*. Information from these sources is not available for all the years under review but, by using them interchangeably, it is possible to build up an understanding of the ways in which the Railway Mission developed a sound organisational and administrative structure and geographically diverse local branch network during the years 1881-1901. As already suggested, it is important to note that the rhetoric of these publications is positive throughout with little attention being paid to negative events such as the closure or failure of a local branch through lack of support. Records are also somewhat piecemeal; details for these publications were largely dependent on reports being sent to the national body from the local branch and it is difficult to make detailed correlations between, or patterns of, local branch activity and membership because some branches were more vocal and vigorous than others. Some branch details were, for example, occasionally absent from the Annual Guide and, as previously noted, it is impossible to tell whether the branch had failed, whether the local secretary had omitted to submit a report or had simply missed the deadline for publication. Intermittent and focused regeneration of branches in the Mission network was a common feature of Railway Mission work and the thesis will examine the ways in which the Mission made frequent calls for women to help to build and revive its local branches. Despite their limitations, the records examined for this thesis do enable a comprehensive picture to be drawn of Railway Mission growth and activity during the last two decades of the nineteenth century.

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<sup>141</sup> For further statistical analysis, see Mallery, A, *Souls on the Line. The Railway Mission 1881-1921* (MA Dissertation, University of York, 2010).

As the branch network grew, so did the range of activities on offer. Newspapers often carried reports of local branch activities. In May 1885, for example, it was reported that, at the West Brompton branch, 'numbers of railwaymen have joined the Bible class and religious meetings' and the committee 'was anxious to build a Mission Hall where Services and Temperance meetings could be held suited to the hours of leisure among railwaymen whose working times differ so greatly from those of ordinary labour.'<sup>142</sup> In the same month, following the success of Bible classes held in the waiting room, a new Railway Mission Hall, capable of seating 400 people, was opened in Ipswich where it was intended to hold Sunday and weekday services for railway employees.<sup>143</sup> Similarly, in the following year, a meeting, attended by about fifty men mainly from the Midland Railway Co. was held in the porters' room at Leeds Station to discuss the opening of a Mission branch there.<sup>144</sup> This type of coverage continued with reports of Railway Mission branches as far apart as Belfast,<sup>145</sup> Aberdeen,<sup>146</sup> Manchester<sup>147</sup> and Liverpool.<sup>148</sup> Reports were typically of annual meetings and Mission success with special events such as Tea Meetings, Gospel and Temperance gatherings. In addition, special initiatives were often held in attempts to attract new members and to assist in the retention of those men who were already converted. These often took the form of Special Missions and there were also special tent and open air meetings. The Special Mission held in York in 1901, for example, was a tent meeting and took place between 16 June and 7 July with meetings and services being held during the day and in the evenings.<sup>149</sup> Naturally, summer was the best time to hold this type of event and, after the completion of the mission in York, the tent was taken to the nearby railway centre of Doncaster to hold a similar campaign.<sup>150</sup> Conferences were also an important feature of Railway Mission work during this period: the national conference of the Mission was held in May each year and regional conferences were held on a regular basis. Both types of event were attended by delegates from local branches and by the Mission's women workers. The national conference generally lasted for three to

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<sup>142</sup> *The Graphic* 2 May 1885.

<sup>143</sup> *Ipswich Journal* 5 May 1885.

<sup>144</sup> *Leeds Mercury* 1 June 1886.

<sup>145</sup> *Belfast Newsletter* 28 March 1887, 16 April 1888, 13 September 1889, 22 March 1890, 23 May 1891.

<sup>146</sup> *Aberdeen Journal* 13 February 1888.

<sup>147</sup> *Manchester Times* 2 October 1881.

<sup>148</sup> *Liverpool Mercury* 21 October 1891.

<sup>149</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1901, p.144.

<sup>150</sup> *Ibid*, p.144

four days while regional events were usually held over a two-day period. As the Mission grew in size, it also produced an assortment of written materials both for its members and for the general public. In addition to the annual guides and reports and the monthly journal, the *Railway Signal*, it produced RMCA membership handbooks, calendars, Christmas cards, religious tracts and temperance cards.<sup>151</sup> A well-organised, administrative network was established and copies of the *Railway Signal* were distributed throughout the country every month. By 1901, however, at the end of the period under review, it could be argued that the Mission had lost some of its exclusive focus and that it had become, in some ways, just another form of religious provision for the working classes. Whilst membership of the RMCA continued to be restricted to Christian railwaymen, attendance at Mission Hall meetings was open to the wider neighbourhood with, for example, Sunday School classes, Mothers Meetings, Band Practice and temperance events. It is impossible to gauge the extent to which non-railway families attended the local Mission Hall although anecdotal evidence in the very small number of branch histories which remain suggest that Sunday School classes and outings were popular among local children.<sup>152</sup> The Railway Mission did, however, retain its focus on the evangelisation of railwaymen in the workplace.

This very brief overview of the Railway Mission between the years 1881 and 1901 shows that, although it never really attracted high numbers of railwaymen, it was successful in developing a strong branch network, a sound administrative and organisational structure and a framework of activities at branch, regional and national level. Despite the number of ways in which it could be compared with the many other religious organisations of the time, a fundamental difference arose between the Railway Mission and the majority of its counterparts. As this section has suggested, it was concerned almost exclusively with the religiosity of railwaymen: as an organisation, it was not concerned with the physical welfare of the men or their families. Whilst charity and the relief of poverty played a large part in

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<sup>151</sup> See, for example, *The Railway Signal*, October 1889.

<sup>152</sup> See, for example, The histories of the Swindon and Melton Constable branches of the Railway Mission, authors unknown, Swindon history written 1948, Melton Constable, 1987 RM/MISS/2/8/4 and RM/MISS/2/5/13.

many religious organisations<sup>153</sup>, the Railway Mission concentrated on the very straightforward aim of conversion and increasing the religious allegiance and moral outlook of railwaymen. Calls for temperance became part of this aim but the main focus throughout remained on increasing the religiosity of the men. The Railway Mission differed from many contemporaneous religious, philanthropic organisations because of its lack of concern about the relief of poverty. Perhaps it did not need to do so since it was working with an occupational structure which promoted the longevity of employment, provided warm clothing, and, in some cases, housing for its employees and paid reasonable, if not relatively high, wages. Poverty was not a pressing issue, religion and taking the men to the moral high ground was the key. This fundamental difference gives this research a new perspective since it differs from much previous work which has considered women's involvement in religious work in the late-nineteenth century. Women's efforts towards the relief of poverty and increasing the standard of living amongst the very poor have been seen as an integral part of their religious work<sup>154</sup>. This thesis changes the focus of women's religious work, not only to a male-industrialised environment but also to one in which, unusually for the period under review, did not concern itself greatly with poverty. Women in the Railway Mission do not appear to have encouraged religious belief through the alleviation of poverty but seem to have found other tools with which to create higher levels of religious affinity amongst the men of the late-Victorian railway industry. The ways in which they did this and the strategies which they used will be discussed in the later chapters of this thesis.

## Conclusion

This chapter has focused on the social, political and economic changes of the last two decades of the nineteenth century which impacted upon working-class men and both middle and working-class women and it has shown how these wider cultural changes also influenced railway and religious culture during the same period. It has shown how social and economic change led to more employment opportunities for women and also to greater recognition of the roles which they were starting to play in

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<sup>153</sup> See, for example, Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914*, Chapter 5 and S Morgan and J de Vries, *Women, Gender and Religious Cultures in Britain, 1800-1940*.

<sup>154</sup> See F Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in 19<sup>th</sup> Century England* and S Morgan, *Women, Religion and Feminism in Britain 1750-1900*, (Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2002).

the increasingly professionalised arena of religion and philanthropy. Of particular relevance to this thesis, the chapter has illustrated the tightly-knit, highly-controlled and male-dominated nature of railway culture in which women remained marginal despite cultural moves towards their greater physical mobility and economic independence.

This chapter has also discussed the growth of the Railway Mission during its first twenty years and the ways in which it was controlled by a male executive of wealthy, religious philanthropists. It has described the development of an extensive branch network which offered a range of activities and has considered the ways in which the Mission, through membership of the RMCA, required obedience and conformity from its members and which, in many ways, as the chapter has also shown, were comparable to the conditions of contemporaneous railway employment.

In the next chapter, I will provide a detailed study of many of the women who worked for the Railway Mission in its early, formative years. I will discuss the ages of these women, their marital status and family backgrounds and the circumstances under which they worked for the Mission. I will consider the type of work which they undertook and the ways in which their roles developed as the Mission grew in size, structure and complexity. This will provide an unprecedented insight into the lives of these ordinary, but largely, forgotten women and this in-depth analysis will also facilitate a greater knowledge and understanding of these women and the ways in which they became involved with the Railway Mission during the late-Victorian period.

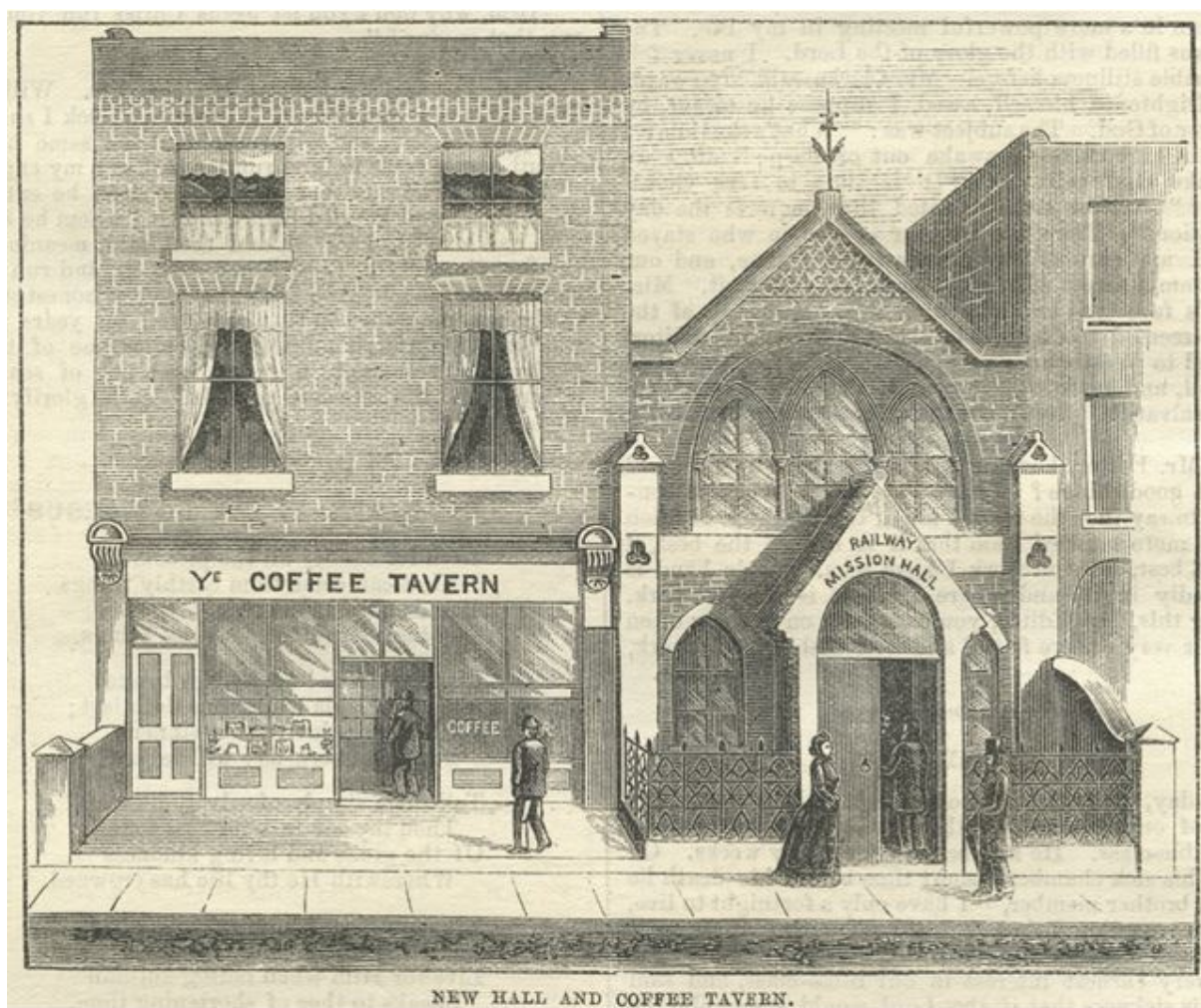


Fig. 4 Coffee Tavern and Railway Mission Hall, Westbourne Park, London

*Railway Signal*, August 1885, p.176

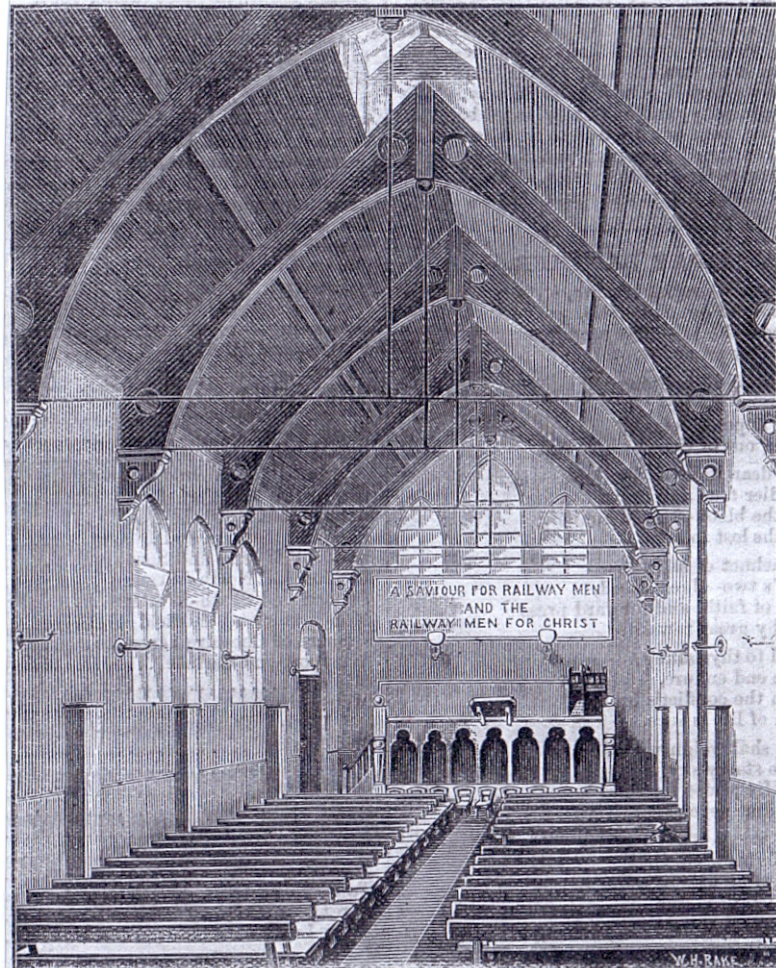


Fig. 5 Interior of Railway Mission Hall, Westbourne Park

*Railway Signal*, August 1885, p.177

## Chapter 2

### Women and the Railway Mission

This chapter will look closely at the women who worked for the Mission in the late-nineteenth century. Part 1 will give an overview of the work which women undertook for the Mission. It will discuss the types of work which developed during the Mission's early years and will provide an understanding of women's roles as they sought ways in which to work with, and for, the men of the late-Victorian railway industry. This Part of the chapter will give background and context for the second Part which will combine information from Mission records with census data to outline the lives of some of the women who worked for the Mission over the twenty-year period between its foundation in 1881 and 1901. Successive sections will examine the influence of marital status, of age and of personal networks on women's involvement with the Mission.

#### Part 1: Women's Roles

It is difficult to be precise about the role which each woman undertook for the Mission as many carried out several roles, either simultaneously, or as their involvement with the Mission developed. In addition, there was significant overlap between some of the types of work which women carried out and Mission reports often used descriptions such as leader and superintendent interchangeably. I will use Mission terminology to describe some roles but will also use my own definitions in order to clarify and differentiate between some of the work which women undertook. I have used both types of definitions in the Appendices to this thesis and will use this Part of the chapter to explain and expand upon some of the terminology. This Part of the chapter is divided into five sections which successively explore women's roles as *Railway Signal* agents and contributors; as branch leaders: as Mission workers and 'Silent Messengers': as supporters and benefactors and as hosts.

## ***Railway Signal* Agents and Contributors**

Work as a *Railway Signal* agent was one of the first roles which women undertook for the Mission. The Mission began to publish the journal, the *Railway Signal*, in August 1882; it was the Mission's main method of disseminating information about its aims and activities and also provided a means of exchanging information between its branches and members. *Railway Signal* agents sold copies of the journal in their areas and sales of the journal provided an important way of raising funds. The first record of *Railway Signal* agents shows that, in November 1882, six women were acting as agents. These included 54-year-old Elizabeth Gates (see Fig.1), superintendent of the Mission branch in Brighton, who played a leading role in Mission activities throughout the period under review; 19-year-old Florence Buchanan, living with her aunt in Bristol; Elizabeth Knight, the 49-year-old wife of John Knight, a manager with the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway; Annie Howett, 38, who lodged with her brother, a hotel keeper in Lowestoft and Mary Ann Tinling, a 44-year-old woman who kept house for her widowed father in Southsea.<sup>1</sup> This brief introductory glimpse into the lives of the women who acted as early *Railway Signal* agents reveals the diversity of their personal circumstances and their backgrounds, something which will emerge further in the second Part of this chapter. As the Mission grew in size, the number of agents became too large for all their names to be published. This was a role with which women were involved throughout the period under review although the extent of their involvement is difficult to quantify because names were not published after the first few years of Mission activity and because it was not a role included in branch reports.

Women also provided articles for the *Railway Signal*. Writing was a common area of work for women, particularly middle-class women, for whom, as noted, access to paid employment was limited. Women could write in the privacy of their own homes, undertaking work for the Mission without the need to come into contact with working-class railwaymen. Some women like Margaret Russell Dow, a single woman in her sixties, wrote religious articles and poems without having any obvious connection to

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<sup>1</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1882, p.64.

the Railway Mission. Edith Mailing, a married, middle-aged woman, living in central London, also wrote for the Mission in its early years in what appears to have been her only connection with the Mission. She addressed herself directly to the men in her poem, 'The Railway Workman's Plea and Its Answer', published in the *Railway Signal* of April 1885; the ways in which her poems addressed railway issues will be discussed later in this thesis. Edith was one of the few working-class women who wrote for the *Railway Signal*; the work of another, engine driver's wife, Jane Machin, will be discussed in the second Part of this chapter. Some women wrote using fictional narrative which usually carried a moral message of conversion and redemption. Grace Pettman was a notable fiction writer whose work was serialised in the *Railway Signal* over a number of months, often over the space of a year. She was also appointed superintendent of the Mission branch in Ramsgate early in 1893<sup>2</sup> and later became superintendent of the Swindon branch. Women used a variety of different genres to try and reach the men and attract their attention and an analysis of the ways in which women both used, and were portrayed in, Mission writing will form an important part of this thesis.

The Mission used Grace Pettman's writing to generate sales. Typically, the monthly episode would end at an exciting point, a cliff-hanger, giving the incentive to buy the *Signal* the following month to continue with the story. As Grace became well known, the Mission advertised her forthcoming writing; in the section 'Notes and Comments, in June 1897, for example, such advance notice was given. 'We are glad to announce that a new illustrated talk by Miss Grace Pettman entitled "Miss Marion's Charge" will be commenced in our next number.'<sup>3</sup> Similarly, but with even more emphasis, 'Miss Grace Pettman's serial story in the *Signal* this year has been followed with so much interest by many of our readers that we are glad to announce another story by Miss Pettman for the *Signal* entitled "The Fall of Morrison Clare," the first chapter of which will appear in our number for January 1901.'<sup>4</sup> When the twelve monthly instalments of 'Morrison Clare' had been published, the *Signal's* editor was 'Glad to say that Miss Grace Pettman has promised to write a serial story

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<sup>2</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1893, p.74.

<sup>3</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1897, p.130.

<sup>4</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1900, p.227.

which will appear in the *Signal* next year.’<sup>5</sup> These notices aimed to secure sales of the *Railway Signal* for a full year, relying not only on the cliff-hanger ending each month but also on the promise of twelve exciting instalments. There was also the impression of exclusivity: Grace was writing to, and for, the readers of the *Signal* and her writing was portrayed as a coup for the Mission.

Other women focused their writing solely on religious topics. In January 1890, Margaret Gerds, a middle-aged woman living in London and described in the census for 1881 as a ‘Writer of Religious Periodicals,’ wrote an article entitled ‘The Pot of Musk – A Thought for the New Year’<sup>6</sup> which highlighted the power and value of prayer. The following New Year, her poem, ‘New Year’s Morning,’<sup>7</sup> urged readers to make resolutions to become more devout. Mabel Turner Irton, a woman in her thirties living in Hampshire, used a variety of topics in her writing. In January 1883, for example, she wrote an article comparing God’s love to maternal love,<sup>8</sup> whilst three months later, using a number of Biblical references, she advised women that they were ‘sent to be a help-meet to men, to be a teacher in all that is true and faithful and Christ-like.’<sup>9</sup> In October 1883, she began, like Edith Mailing, to use railway terminology as a way of expressing her religious message and this aspect of her work will be discussed more fully in the following chapter.

### **Branch Superintendents, Leaders and Presidents**

In the Appendices to this thesis, I have described a small number of women as leaders since this was the description given to them in Mission records. This appears to have been an issue of semantics and, for the purposes of this thesis, branch leaders and superintendents will be considered together. Women as branch superintendents and leaders were fundamental to the growth of the Mission and, as the thesis will discuss, they were in great demand because they were considered by many railwaymen to be the essential component of a successful Mission branch. Women in this leadership role had responsibility for the running of the Mission

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<sup>5</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1901, p.226.

<sup>6</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.15.

<sup>7</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1891, p.15.

<sup>8</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1883, p.97.

<sup>9</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1883, p.167.

branch; in some cases, they were involved in the founding of a branch whilst, in others, they were persuaded by friends or acquaintances to run or take over an established branch. Interestingly, railwaymen sometimes asked a local woman, known for her involvement in religious work to set up a Mission branch. This was the case for Elizabeth Gates in Brighton and Caroline Ridley in Bury St Edmunds. The work of both women will be discussed later in this thesis.

Initially, branch superintendents led religious classes and meetings. While many retained this aspect of spiritual work, the role came to encompass more of an administrative aspect as the Mission grew and its organisational structure became more complex. Branch leaders needed the religious knowledge to lead Bible classes but also the organisational skills to arrange accommodation for the classes, deal with branch accounts, organise tea meetings which were often very large-scale affairs and arrange for speakers at meetings. They also organised the publicity and the arrangements for the Special Missions which a large number of branches held. These missions often lasted for over a week, involving meetings during the day and evenings with guest speakers addressing large audiences. Branch superintendents were also usually involved in raising funds for the Mission and, as more branches began to have their own Mission Halls, in raising and collecting funds for the building of these halls. Collections and appeals for funds were not limited to the building of halls. There were constant appeals and collections for the Mission's convalescent homes, for foreign missions, for religious literature to distribute among railwaymen and to help with the running costs of the branch. The running of a local branch thus demanded time and commitment; it involved not only the provision of a wide range of religious events and meetings but also organisational, administrative and financial acumen. Given the effort and time which could be required to run a Mission branch, it is not surprising that only a relatively small number of branch superintendents were married and widowed women whereas, in contrast, 61 of the single women identified in this research, more than one third of the total, held this position. These women did not work in isolation but as part of a network of friends and acquaintances within the branch and spread across the Mission. While superintendents retained responsibility for the branch, as the organisational structure of the Mission became more complex they came to rely in particular on a group of women whom I have referred to as 'missioners.' Their work will be discussed in the next section.

Some women took up a prominent role within the Railway Mission by using their social standing in the local area. Such women often became branch presidents. It has proved difficult to define the role of branch president since this is another term which seems to have been used interchangeably in Mission records with that of superintendent. Gertrude Morris in Doncaster, for example, whose work will be discussed more fully in the second Part of this chapter, seems to have taken on both roles. She hosted high-profile meetings in support of the Mission in the capacity of president but she also ran the Mission branch and led Bible classes. Similarly, Emma Walker in Leicester, who worked closely with her sister Fanny, was referred to in Mission records as both branch president and superintendent whilst the indefatigable Edith Scott seems to have acted as president, leader and superintendent of the Mission branch in Eastbourne. It seems likely that the title of president may have been used to raise the profile of both the women and the Mission branch on occasions such as public meetings where the aim was to showcase the Mission as a creditable organisation and, more importantly, one which was eminently suitable to support in terms of financial donations. Support of all types was essential to the Mission and, in the following sections, I will discuss the involvement of women who provided support for, and to, the Mission.

### **Missioners and 'Silent Messengers'**

I have used the term 'missioners' to describe women who were not branch superintendents but were active in religious leadership in the branch by, for example, holding Bible classes or Sunday School meetings. Branch superintendents often led religious classes but, as the Mission grew, women who acted as missioners were essential to its development and its ability to cope with a growing membership, especially as branches began to offer more classes and activities. Some women combined the role of missioner with other Railway Mission work. Jane Caldecott in Suffolk, for example, led Railway Mission meetings at a number of branches in the area, standing in for Miss Sayer in Lowestoft when she was away but also providing entertainment for the men at her own home: her work will be discussed more fully in the second Part of this chapter. Missioners were fundamental to the establishment of a home-visiting programme and the promotion of evangelical belief based on the

premise that religion should be taken to the men if the men could not be persuaded to visit the Mission branch. Some women working as missionaries provided the men with religious literature, others, like 'Silent Messengers,' chose not to work with them on a face-to-face basis.

In the Appendices to this thesis, I have referred to women who provided religious literature for the men without further involvement in the Railway Mission as 'Silent Messengers.' This was a term used by the Mission for women who, often anonymously, provided a mix of books, journals and religious texts for the men. Only a small number of women have been identified as working in this way largely because many worked anonymously and also because, where women were named, information was very limited and it has not been possible to link some of these very scanty details with census records.

The provision of religious material was another way of reaching railwaymen who did not attend a Railway Mission branch and Mission records refer to women leaving packages of religious tracts for the men in station buildings and sending tracts to their homes. Many of these women remained anonymous and it seems that, although they had a concern about the religious welfare of the men, they did not wish to work with them face-to-face. Reaching railwaymen in this way was considered important by the Mission and the seemingly diffident nature of the women who acted as 'Silent Messengers' was, of course, in keeping with the ideological feminine characteristics of shyness and quietness which were exemplified in the Mission's description of the fictional Miss Go-Ahead as its ideal female worker. For some women, sending packages to the men led to a more active role in the Mission. Frances Ellison, for example, responded to a request to write to a small number of men before becoming superintendent of the Mission branch in West Kirby, Liverpool. It seems that the introductory work of providing railwaymen with religious literature gave her the confidence to take up the more involved role of Mission superintendent.

### **Mission Supporters and Benefactors**

Women provided support to the Railway Mission in a number of ways. I will firstly discuss those women who, through their standing in local society, supported the

local branch by attending Mission meetings aimed at raising the profile of, and attracting funds for, the local branch. I have referred to these women as ‘supporters’ in the Appendices, I will then go on to discuss women who provided money or goods for the Mission whom I have called ‘benefactors.’

Mary Standerling provides a good example of a Railway Mission supporter. A single, middle-aged woman living in the market town of Selby, Yorkshire, she was described as ‘an important Selby benefactress’ in a display in Selby library in March 2014. Her father, William, a ship owner, died in 1866 and she lived with her widowed mother, also Mary, until her death in 1873. Mary was the sole survivor of her family. Her sister, Anna, died in infancy in 1857, another sister, 26-year-old Elizabeth, died four years after their mother, Mary, in 1877 and her only brother, William, died in 1886. She made several significant contributions to the town including the provision of an annual Christmas party at the workhouse and meeting the cost of building a venue for local social events, the Standerling Memorial Hall. Following a devastating fire at the town’s abbey in 1906, she arranged and paid for the installation of the impressive stained-glass ‘Germanus’ window in honour of her parents and, in 1907, in memory of her brother, William, and sister, Elizabeth, she also met the cost of developing the town’s cottage hospital by adding a ward for women and children, a mortuary and an operating theatre. She was friendly with the Burton sisters, Annie and Fanny, who, in 1881, lived alongside Mary in Audus Street in the town and with whom she went on holiday. The census for 1891, for example, shows that Mary and Annie were both staying in Bournemouth whilst details for 1901 show that all three women were staying at a boarding house in the nearby spa town of Harrogate. Annie and Fanny Burton were closely involved with the Railway Mission branch in Selby where Fanny was branch superintendent. Mary Standerling supported her friends by attending notable meetings of the Mission branch: at the annual meeting in January 1894, for example, Mary was on the platform with ‘R Nixon, General Secretary to the Railway Mission, Miss Bird (York), and the Misses Burton.’<sup>10</sup> Mary was clearly a well-known and influential figure in the town and her presence at such events would have endorsed the credibility of this small, but active, branch of the Railway Mission. Similarly, Mary Mackie and her sister-in-law, Edith, supported Mission branch

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<sup>10</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1894, p.58.

superintendent, Mary Briggs, in Wakefield. Their involvement will be discussed more fully in the second Part of this chapter as will that of Sarah Sykes, a wealthy married woman, who often supported Elizabeth Gates, superintendent of the Mission branch in Brighton. In addition to providing visible support through her presence at meetings, Sarah was also a benefactor of the Mission.

Sarah, whose husband Joseph was a wealthy landowner, gave a donation of £5 5s to a fund set up to build a Railway Mission Hall in Brighton (see Fig. 2). Elizabeth Knight, then widow of J.P. Knight, the former manager of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway Company, gave £150 and, it was noted at a meeting held to dedicate the hall in 1894, that Sarah Sykes donated a further '50 guineas that day.'<sup>11</sup> Prochaska comments on the extent of financial giving and on the increase in the numbers of women who gave to religious and philanthropic organisations in nineteenth-century Britain.<sup>12</sup> He writes of the pressure to donate and describes charitable giving as a 'branch of fashion' which became 'a status symbol'<sup>13</sup> and the *Railway Signal* in August 1894 does reflect a competitive element in relation to its reporting of the amounts of money which women gave. Moreover, donations were not limited to cash. Reports in the *Railway Signal* describe women donating food for the large-scale teas which formed part of Mission life and, at one of these occasions in March 1897, when 'nearly 400 sat down to tea,' there was a 'new tea service, the handles of which were decorated with a rosette of red, green and white ribbon (railway colours) and a representation of a railway line, suspended from one end of the table to the other, all this the gift of Mrs Sykes of Carisbrooke.' She also provided 'a stupendous bouquet for the end of the platform comprising of twenty one separate bouquets.'<sup>14</sup>

When, in the 1890s, a small number of women began to receive remuneration for their Mission work, female benefactors provided funding for the salaries of some of these women. This type of donation, which facilitated the employment of a female missionary, had a double impact. It provided the Railway Mission with the funds to appoint a female leader to a branch whilst simultaneously enabling a woman who did

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<sup>11</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1894, p.150.

<sup>12</sup> Prochaska, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth Century England*, p.29.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid*, p.40.

<sup>14</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1897 p.80.

not have the financial means to support herself to undertake religious work for the Mission. In July 1890, for example, when Mary Noyes was appointed to work in the railway town of Ashford, it was noted that her salary would be fixed 'after communicating with Mrs Scott of Eastbourne.'<sup>15</sup> The work of the women of the Scott family will be discussed in the second Part of this chapter. Similarly, four years later, when Miss M.J. Davidson was appointed to work at Leeds, her salary was agreed at £45 per annum 'of which Mrs Ballard of Walton on Thames agreed to provide £40.'<sup>16</sup> There will be a further, more detailed discussion regarding the introduction of paid employment for Railway Mission work in Chapter 4.

### **Accommodation, Entertainment Providers and Drawing Room Meeting Hosts**

Women provided accommodation for the Mission in a variety of ways ranging from the provision of a room for a meeting to their involvement in the building of a Mission Hall. A Mrs Walter Ashby, for example, gave land at the end of her garden in Redhill, Surrey for a Mission Hall. She also provided the funds for the hall to be built and became superintendent of the Mission branch.<sup>17</sup> Annie Amys, the 30-year-old, single superintendent of the Mission branch in Tunbridge Wells, it was noted in 1893, 'wished to arrange that a hall purchased by her should become the property of the Mission.'<sup>18</sup> Annie was an active worker for the Mission. She organised the first conference to be held in Tunbridge Wells on 18 April 1890,<sup>19</sup> and was involved in the opening of branches at Three Bridges in London in 1892 and at Horsham in 1895.<sup>20</sup> She then took up the position of superintendent at the Three Bridges branch in addition to that at Tunbridge Wells and held both positions until at least 1910.<sup>21</sup>

Other women provided more modest domestic forms of accommodation; Mary Wilkins, for example, a married woman from Cheltenham, provided a room for meetings in her home. A report from the Cheltenham branch noted that: 'on 13 October 1889, a meeting was held at the home of Mrs Wilkins of Alstone Lodge who

<sup>15</sup> RM Minutes July 1890 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>16</sup> RM Minutes 7 November 1894 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>17</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December, 1894, pp.234-235.

<sup>18</sup> RM Minutes 29 November 1893 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>19</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1890, p.98.

<sup>20</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1895, p.27

<sup>21</sup> RMCA Annual Reports RM/MISS/1/5/1.

so kindly places at our disposal, Sunday after Sunday, one of her many handsome rooms with a fire (if needed) and a full supply of seats etc.'<sup>22</sup> During the summer of the following year, no meeting was held in August thus allowing 'our kind friends at Alstone Lodge a little respite from the extra work entailed by our meetings, Sunday after Sunday, in the pleasantly situated rooms set apart for our use in this beautiful country mansion.'<sup>23</sup> In complete contrast, but nevertheless useful, was the tent provided by Sophie Hammond for an open air meeting held in Norwich on 3 July 1892.<sup>24</sup> Sophie, then a 53-year-old single woman living with her widowed mother, was involved in the running of a nurses' home in nearby Fakenham.

Women also used their own homes to provide entertainment for members of the Mission. Sisters Margaret and Gulielma Binyon, both in their thirties, lived with their widowed mother, Martha, in Worcester. On 10 July 1890, they invited about forty members of the local Mission branch to spend an evening at their 'beautiful home in Henwick Grove. A splendid tea was provided' and members were 'regaled with a bountiful supply of strawberries after which (they) were permitted to walk around the gardens and grounds' <sup>25</sup> The following year, members 'enjoyed a bountiful meat tea at Henwick Grove, the charming residence of the Misses Binyon.'<sup>26</sup>

In addition to their homes, women used other venues to provide entertainment for Mission members. In July 1900, for example, about 100 members went to Webb's Park in Brighton where 'after a sumptuous tea, the company were moved together in one huge group and photographed. Cheers were heartily given for Mrs Sykes.'<sup>27</sup> Women such as Elizabeth Gates and Mary Skipton used their social connections to provide entertainment at the homes of local celebrities: on 20 August 1892, for example, members of the Uxbridge Road branch of the Mission had their annual outing to Dollis Hill where they had tea on the lawn and 'strolled around the lovely grounds.' Members asked their leader, Mrs Skipton, a middle-aged woman who was very active in Railway Mission affairs, to thank the Earl and Countess of Aberdeen

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<sup>22</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1889, p.212.

<sup>23</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1890, p.215.

<sup>24</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1892, p.198.

<sup>25</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1890, p.175.

<sup>26</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1891, p.199.

<sup>27</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1900, p.156.

‘for their kindness in granting us the use of Dollis Hill for our outing.’<sup>28</sup> Reports of this type of entertainment at the homes of wealthy middle-class women and elsewhere appeared frequently in Mission records and will be discussed in more detail later in this thesis.

As discussed in the Introduction, female activism through the rituals of polite entertainment was not new. Gleadle, Richardson and Midgley all note activism in, or emanating from, the home and Midgley, as noted, describes early-nineteenth century tea parties at which the use of slave-grown sugar was boycotted in support of the anti-slavery movement.<sup>29</sup> Visiting was an important part of middle-class Victorian culture and women in the Railway Mission similarly used their own homes to hold drawing room meetings to which they invited friends and acquaintances in order to raise awareness of, and support for, the Mission. Gordon and Nair comment on the popularity and frequency of visiting and entertaining friends and relations, citing the drawing room as the space to which women retired during entertainment in the evening as well as the space used by women for gatherings during the day<sup>30</sup> while Flanders and, more recently, Hamlett reflect on the design of the Victorian home and the extent to which the drawing room was considered to be a ‘feminine’ space.<sup>31</sup> Women in the Railway Mission used these rituals of visiting and entertainment as a way of raising the profile of the Railway Mission in their local area. Married women sometimes involved their husbands in these Mission meetings and the premise that drawing room meetings were an inherent feature of middle-class familial, social culture is exemplified by the fact that, although married women accounted for less than a quarter of the total women identified in this research, the vast majority of women identified as holding these meetings were married.

In 1889, 69-year-old Emily Bennett held a drawing room meeting in Plymouth with her 85-year-old husband, John, a retired solicitor. They invited a number of ‘ladies

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<sup>28</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1892, p.155.

<sup>29</sup> K Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens. Women, Gender and Political Culture 1815-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), Chapter 3, S Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women*, Chapter 1, C Midgley, *Feminism and Empire. Women Activists in Imperial Britain*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2007), Chapter 2.

<sup>30</sup> E Gordon and G Nair, *Public Lives. Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), pp.125-6.

<sup>31</sup> See, for example, J Flanders, *The Victorian House*, (London: Harper Perennial, 2004) p.xxv and J Hamlett, *Material Relations: domestic interiors and middle-class families in England 1850-1910*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010),

and gentlemen to meet Mr WH Seagram, a member of the Railway Mission committee in London' and it was agreed to raise funds to build a Railway Mission Hall 'centrally situated for the majority of Railwaymen in Plymouth, Devonport and Stonehouse whether employed by the Great Western or the South Western Railway.'<sup>32</sup> John Bennett was to be on the local committee set up to raise funds. The couple are likely to have been well-known in Plymouth where Emily was born and where John had practised as a solicitor and they would have been well-placed to attract the interest of the wealthy middle-class elite. This meeting, held just a few years after the Mission was formed, appears to have been a social, genteel affair but, as time went on, drawing room meetings became more organised and commercially orientated. Nine years later, Mrs Ann Smith of Keighley, Yorkshire, whose husband, Alfred was a worsted manufacturer, hosted a drawing room meeting 'where a number of ladies gathered together to hear about the work.' This was more than just a social gathering; arrangements had been made to have women already working in the Mission to speak about their work including Miss Davidson of Leeds and Lavinia Grayson (see Fig. 11) of Bradford. The meeting was successful: 'several ladies present kindly promised annual subscriptions, three others gave donations towards the carrying on of Gospel and Temperance work amongst our Railwaymen'<sup>33</sup> and a new branch was opened in Keighley. Fanny Laycock, a 37-year-old woman living with her brother, Edmund, another worsted manufacturer, became superintendent and Louisa Laycock, also 37, helped her as a missionary. The relationship between Fanny and Louisa is not clear although it is probable that they were cousins. The spinning and manufacture of worsted was a significant area of commerce in this area of late-nineteenth century Yorkshire and it is likely that the Smith and Laycock families knew each other socially as well as commercially. There would have been kudos for the Mission in gaining the support of these two well-known families.

Miss Davidson from Leeds also spoke at a drawing room meeting held by Helen Sharp and her husband, Thomas, a ship owner, in Newcastle on Tyne in March 1901. She addressed the meeting with Jane Gilder, superintendent of the Mission branch in nearby Gateshead. Miss Davidson 'spoke of general work at home and

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<sup>32</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1889, p.17.

<sup>33</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1899, p.9.

abroad' while Jane Gilder 'gave an interesting account of local work.' The vicar of the local parish church presided over the meeting and explained 'the special need of this class of effort amongst the railwaymen.' He also read a letter from Mr S Holliday, the station master, which described 'the excellent work being carried out.'<sup>34</sup> This was a well-orchestrated meeting with testimony from two respected local men and from two women experienced in Mission work: moreover, it was held in the home of a wealthy family which was almost certainly well-known in the area. This was commercial religiosity driven by women to raise funds for the Mission. The tenor of the meeting reflected the social and economic changes of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries when women were becoming increasingly active in the commercial world outside of the home and which enabled women to develop a commercial approach to their Mission work.

### **An Overview of Women's Roles**

The first Part of this chapter has given an insight into the types of work with which women in the Railway Mission became involved. It has shown that the work varied significantly. Those women who provided the men with religious material, the 'Silent Messengers,' and the women who wrote articles for the *Railway Signal* did not need to cross the boundaries of established cultural femininity; many remained unknown, working from the privacy of the home. Women who hosted drawing room meetings, who made donations or who provided other benefits also retained middle-class respectability and worked within the cultural norms of feminine religious philanthropy by acting from, or within, the sanctity of their homes. Other women working for the Mission began to move out of the home. *Railway Signal* agents sold the journal in their local area; women missionaries worked with railwaymen in the public domain; some women like Mary Wilkins in Cheltenham opened space within her home for religious meetings whilst others, like the Binyon sisters in Worcester, allowed railwaymen into their homes and gardens for annual outings. Women who worked as superintendents took responsibility for the religious and organisational life of a Mission branch. They became involved in areas of commercial administration in the same way as women who had begun, in increasing numbers, to work in the public

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<sup>34</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1901, p.76.

world of business. Women worked for the Mission in ways which reflected their evangelical commitment but which also enabled them to expand their experience and knowledge. They were able to participate, within the setting of the Mission, in the growing economic opportunities of the late-nineteenth century. This Part of the chapter has considered women's work; the second Part will look in some detail into women's lives and show how their personal circumstances influenced, or impacted upon, their work for the Mission.

## **Part 2: Mission Women's Lives**

This Part of the chapter will focus upon exploring the backgrounds of the women who worked for the Railway Mission during the early years of its development. This has been achieved by identifying women from the brief information given in Mission records and then trying to reconcile these details to census and related data. Mission records suggest that a large number of women became interested in Railway Mission work; some appear to have been involved only fleetingly whilst others were busy with Mission activity throughout the period under review. Appendix 1 contains details of the 184 women for whom I have been able to combine Mission and census records to create profiles of those who were involved in some form of Mission activity during the period under review. Appendix 1 gives the name of the woman, her year of birth, her marital status, the Mission branch or branches with which she was connected, the personal arrangements under which she worked and the role which she had in the Mission. This Part of the chapter will concentrate on the personal information which will enable us to move beyond the details shown in Mission records more than a hundred years ago to give a glimpse into the lives of these women. It will allow us to have an understanding of the woman behind the name. This Part of the chapter will consider the marital status of women, their age, their family background and their family or household situation. This type of detail will give not only an insight into individual women but will also provide a broader picture in which to consider the group as a whole. It will help us to establish the extent to which there was a 'typical' female Railway Mission worker and how far, if at all, she can be compared to the fictional 'Miss Go-Ahead.' I will firstly discuss the marital status of the women whom I have been able to identify. Using examples, I will consider the ways in which marital status may have impacted upon the type of work which women

undertook for the Mission and how far this may have influenced the ways in which they went about their work. I will then discuss the age profiles of these different groups of women and explore the extent to which age may have influenced their involvement with the Mission.

## **Section 1: Marital Status**

### **Single Women**

Appendix 2 shows that 136 of the 184 women identified were single at the time at which they undertook work for the Railway Mission. Single women were often considered a problem during the mid to late-nineteenth century. They were described as ‘surplus,’ notably by the Lancastrian industrialist, W.R. Greg, largely because there was no apparent role for them in a society in which the dominant, ideological discourse stressed that women’s proper vocation was marriage and motherhood. As Midgley notes, his ‘misogynist’ article ‘called for the shipping of unmarried women like surplus goods to the colonies so that they could fulfil their “proper” roles of wives and mothers.’<sup>35</sup> This Part of the chapter will show the many and varied ways in which single women became involved with the Railway Mission and how they were able to develop worthwhile and viable roles for themselves within the organisation. Clearly, it is not possible to discuss all of the women detailed in Appendix 2 and, in this section, I will focus on three single women, Rose Doswell, Ethel Middlemass and Grace Pettman. All of them married whilst they were working for the Mission and I will consider the impact which marriage had on their Mission work. I will then discuss a number of women who remained single.

Rose Doswell was born in Weymouth, Dorset in 1864; her father, Henry, was a timber merchant<sup>36</sup> and Rose became involved in work for the Railway Mission in Weymouth in the late 1880s. She seems to have made an impression in Mission circles and soon began to work outside of the Weymouth area. She was present at the inaugural meeting of the branch in Bournemouth in 1887 at which she spoke of

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<sup>35</sup> C Midgley, *Feminism and Empire. Women Activists in Imperial Britain 1790-1865*, p.136. See also A James Hammerton, *Emigrant Gentlewomen*, (London: Croom Helm Ltd., 1979).

<sup>36</sup> 1881 Census.

the work which she had undertaken at the large railway centre of Swindon. During the same month, December 1887, she took part in a mission held to mark the opening of a branch in Reading and spoke 'each night for a week.'<sup>37</sup> In January 1888, it was announced that she would be visiting Kentish Town following her visit to Dorchester where she had given a 'stirring address' in the preceding November.<sup>38</sup> In April 1888, Rose conducted an eight-day mission in Kentish Town and a ten-day mission at West Brompton and, in the following month, it was announced that she was to begin work in London on 4 May, in Leamington on 25 May and in Crewe on 9 June.<sup>39</sup> Rose was clearly heavily involved in Mission work at this time and reports describe her as singing solos, playing the harmonium, visiting railwaymen at work as well as addressing large groups of men at religious meetings. The last report of her work for the Mission was at Salisbury in November 1888 at a ten-day mission where the men were 'privileged with the cheering presence of Miss Doswell. Her beautiful singing and loving appeals have touched many hearts.'<sup>40</sup> Despite this flurry of activity and her popularity with the Mission, there is no further mention of Rose in Mission records. Census records, however, show that, in 1890, at the age of 26, she married Joseph Thornton, a newspaper manufacturer from Leeds. The couple settled in Leeds and, in 1911, appeared to be living comfortably with their three children, a housekeeper and a houseboy.<sup>41</sup> There is no evidence to suggest that Rose was involved with Railway Mission work in Leeds although, as I will discuss later, the city was an area of large-scale railway activity.

In contrast, Ethel Middlemass, also born in 1864, maintained links with the Railway Mission following her marriage. Ethel initially played the harmonium at meetings of the Railway Mission branch in Cheltenham and then became its superintendent. In November 1889, Ethel married Edward Schmeder, a 38-year-old stockbroker from London and an article in the *Railway Signal* provides an insight into the relationship between RMCA members and their female leader. At the couple's wedding reception, 'the numerous and costly presents included an illuminated address and elegant remembrances from the Railwaymen of Cheltenham as an acknowledgment

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<sup>37</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1888, p.35.

<sup>38</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1888, pp.13,18.

<sup>39</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1888, p.90.

<sup>40</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1888, p.205.

<sup>41</sup> 1911 Census.

of her Christian efforts amongst them. The address was signed by sixty of the men, four of whom went to London to present it.<sup>42</sup> The report shows that this was a society wedding held at the town residence of Ethel's cousin, Sir William Cunliffe Brooks Bart. MP who 'kindly entertained the deputation the whole of the day'<sup>43</sup> and provides an interesting image of working-class railwaymen being involved in such a high-profile, upper-class occasion.

After her honeymoon in Italy, Ethel lived in Kensington with her new husband. She does not appear to have become involved with the Railway Mission in London but often attended the branch in Cheltenham. In June 1890, for example, Ethel and her husband attended a meeting taken by her mother and, during a visit the following Easter, the branch report stated that the Good Friday 'tea and meeting was a greater success than ever because of the visit from our late leader Mrs E Schmeder.'<sup>44</sup> Ethel's continuing involvement with the Railway Mission branch in Cheltenham was, no doubt, linked to her mother, Mary's, involvement at Mission meetings. Mary Middlemass, the widow of William, a surgeon in the Madras Medical Service, was twenty years younger than her husband and still only in her fifties when he died in October 1886. She seems to have become involved in Mission work following his death although she had a more peripheral role than that of her daughter. At the opening of the Cheltenham Mission Hall in November 1894, for example, she, with Ethel, was on the platform with other high-profile members of the community.<sup>45</sup> Similarly, it was Mary Middlemass who unveiled a memorial tablet dedicated to Mary Ann Bennett, the branch superintendent who took on the role following Ethel's marriage.<sup>46</sup>

Finally, Grace Pettman, the author discussed in the first Part of this chapter, provides an interesting, if unusual example, of a woman who continued to work after her marriage. Grace was born in Ramsgate in 1870; her father, Thomas, was shown as a Professor of Music in the census for 1891 and Grace, a Teacher of Music. It seems likely that Grace, in line with many other young women in the 1890s, wanted or

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<sup>42</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.4.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid*, p.4.

<sup>44</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1891, p.86.

<sup>45</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1894, p.233.

<sup>46</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1896, p.164.

needed to work. Grace was appointed superintendent of the Mission branch in Ramsgate in 1893 and, six years later, became superintendent of the branch in Swindon. As discussed, she also became a prolific writer for the *Railway Signal*. She married Herbert Pout, an evangelist nine years her junior, in the spring of 1902 and continued both to work and write for the Railway Mission well beyond the period under review. Interestingly, she was described as an author in the census for 1911 at a time when the employment details of married women were generally omitted from census returns. It is also interesting that 1911 was the first year in which respondents completed the census returns themselves and the original of the form shows that it was signed by Herbert. Perhaps this speaks more of the relationship between Grace and the husband who acknowledged his wife's career than of standard practice at the time.

Of course, not all single women married and many of the women shown in Appendix 2 remained single. The majority of these women were either living with their family members or were economically independent, usually from inherited investment income. Only 14 of the 136 single women identified had paid employment in addition to their Mission work and details of these women are given in Appendix 8, which also includes one widowed woman, Caroline Ridley, in Bury St Edmunds. The majority of these women were, as shown in Appendix 8, involved in some form of teaching in a school or as a governess. As discussed in Chapter 1, teaching was an occupation considered suitable for women and the position of the governess was widely represented in contemporary fictional genre.<sup>47</sup> Two of the women shown in Appendix 8, Helen Spreat and Edith Tilby, who were involved in teaching work, went on to take up overseas missionary work. Helen Spreat, who was superintendent of the Mission branch in Exeter for four years, went to Ceylon as a missionary in 1896 but, within six months, she became ill and had to return home. She died two years later at the age of 46.<sup>48</sup> Following her work as a teacher, Edith Tilby began work with the Railway Mission in Clapham Junction in 1892; she resigned four years later in order to take up missionary work in Greece but she, too, became ill and had to return to Britain where, after a period of recuperation, she resumed work with the Railway

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<sup>47</sup> See, for example, E Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), first published 1847, A Bronte, *Agnes Grey*, (London: Penguin Classics, 1998), first published 1847, R Brandon, *Other People's Daughters. The Life and Times of the Governess*, (London: Orion Books, 2009).

<sup>48</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1898, p.153.

Mission. Helen and Edith stand out as women moving between home and overseas mission fields. There is no evidence to suggest that this was wide-scale practice and, indeed, the vast majority of women identified in my research worked exclusively in England. Two of the other women shown in Appendix 8, Annie Checkley from Folkestone and Mary Jeram in Havant, both worked in other areas of religious philanthropic work in addition to their work with the Railway Mission: Annie was superintendent of the London City Mission Home whilst, interestingly, Mary, who was superintendent of the Havant branch of the Railway Mission, undertook paid work with another group of men in the Soldiers' Home in Newport, Hampshire.<sup>49</sup> This followed a period of employment as an assistant mistress at Redland College, in Westbury, Gloucestershire.<sup>50</sup>

Sarah Parrott had a more unusual but interesting background. She was born in Scotland in 1841 although she lived for most of her life in Stockton on Tees where she worked as a 'Ladies Hairdresser' with both her mother, also Sarah, and her grandmother, Mary. This was a family business which also sold 'Fancy Goods'.<sup>51</sup> Sarah, her mother, her grandmother and her sisters, Elizabeth and Mary Ann, all worked as 'Ladies Hairdressers' whilst her brother, Joseph, dealt with men's hair. Sarah's father was a Primitive Methodist minister and, in the spring of 1892 and at the age of 52, Sarah married William Alderson, another Primitive Methodist minister. Their marriage was fairly short-lived as William died in 1901. Sarah was active in Railway Mission work in Stockton throughout the period under review and aspects of her work will be discussed later in this thesis.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the last two decades of the nineteenth century were periods during which women were beginning to find paid employment in increasing numbers. Appendix 8 shows that the women listed followed the commonly accepted areas of work considered suitable for women; it is interesting to note, however, that the majority of the women shown were not the young women often assumed to be seeking work during this period. Hannah Benson, for example, was working as a governess at the age of 50 and, in 1901, when she was the principal of a school in

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<sup>49</sup> 1901 Census.

<sup>50</sup> 1891 Census.

<sup>51</sup> 1881 Census.

Weymouth, she was aged 68.<sup>52</sup> Jenny Chitham, superintendent of the Railway Mission in Colchester, was in her forties whilst teaching at a private school in the town with her sister, Lizzie. Ten of the fifteen women identified as having paid employment were born before 1860 and it does seem likely that economic necessity, rather than any sense of modernity, led them to take up paid employment in addition to their work for the Railway Mission.

## **Married Women**

Only 37 of the 184 women identified as working for the Railway Mission were married. It is possible that fewer of the married women working for the Mission could be identified in my research because of the difficulties in tracing them in census records. It was, for example, unusual for the Christian name of a married woman to be given and, even where an initial was shown, this was usually that of the husband. However, given that the number of single women shown in Mission records in general was much greater than that of married women, any discrepancy is likely to be minimal. Details of the married women working for the Railway Mission are given in Appendix 3 and are based on women who were married at the point in which they began work with the Mission. They do not include those women who married whilst working for the Mission.

Census records suggest that the majority of these women, as in the case of single women, had middle-class backgrounds although a small number of working-class women also became involved with the Mission. Six of the women in Appendix 3 were married to railwaymen, four of whom were in managerial or supervisory roles. Harriett Forward, for example, was the wife of William, the local station master, when she took charge of the Mission branch in Wimborne. The station master held an important position in the local community and this was especially the case in rural areas such as Wimborne where he was 'an institution, like a school master, parson or blacksmith.' Although part of the community, he 'remained foremost a railwayman, often slightly aloof, the district representative of the company'<sup>53</sup> and it is likely that Harriett and William would have enjoyed a social position of some standing. Harriett,

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<sup>52</sup> 1901 Census.

<sup>53</sup> D St John, *The Country Railway*, (Nairn: David St John Publishing, 1991), p.58.

born in 1834, was 58 when she took on the role of Mission superintendent in 1892 when the branch 'was re-started.'<sup>54</sup> This suggests that Wimborne was one of the Mission branches which struggled along, closing from time to time before starting up again and, a report in the *Railway Signal* two years later, confirmed that Wimborne was 'a small branch waiting and expecting greater blessings still.' The same report noted that Harriett had provided a tea 'for all attending the meetings.'<sup>55</sup> It seems probable that some of the local men, especially those who worked on the station, may have felt some pressure to attend these events hosted by their immediate superior's wife and the influence which senior railwaymen may have had on their junior colleagues will be discussed in more detail in the next chapter of this thesis.

Margaret Wedgewood was the wife of railway superintendent, Robert; despite her large family of nine children, Margaret was closely involved with the Mission in Hockley, Birmingham where Robert was in charge of the Goods Yard. Both Margaret and Harriett lived in railway-provided accommodation. Another railwayman's wife, Gertrude Marriott, like Margaret, took an active role in Mission affairs along with her husband, William, who was firstly an engineer and then locomotive superintendent on the Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway in Norfolk. The work of both Margaret Wedgewood and Gertrude Marriott will be discussed later in this chapter. Elizabeth Knight, the wife of John Knight, manager of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, was a close friend of Elizabeth Gates, superintendent of the Mission branch in Brighton, and she continued to support the Brighton Mission after her husband's sudden death in July 1886. Both Elizabeth Gates and Elizabeth Knight enjoyed similar middle-class life styles and the two women worked closely together to support and develop Mission work.

In contrast, both Jane Machin and Elizabeth Mattrass were married to working-class railwaymen. Jane lived with her husband, John, an engine driver, in an area of Burton-on-Trent which was highly populated with railway families. In 1891, for example, when the couple lived with their children in Grange Street, their neighbours included two signalmen, two goods guards, two passenger guards, a railway van driver, a railway policeman, a railway cleaner, five engine fitters, six engine drivers, a

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<sup>54</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1892, p.107.

<sup>55</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1894, p.12.

railway clerk, four firemen, two railway labourers and two railway porters.<sup>56</sup> Although Jane must have been very busy with her family of ten children, she seems to have immersed herself in railway and Railway Mission life. She was a *Railway Signal* agent, she wrote articles for the journal and she regularly accompanied John to Mission meetings. Elizabeth's husband, William, was a fireman when she first became involved in Mission work; the couple lived in Exeter and, like Jane and John Machin, in an area of high-railway family occupation where their neighbours included two railway porters, an engine driver and a railway clerk.<sup>57</sup> Elizabeth continued to be active in Mission work when the couple moved to Newton Abbot on William's promotion to engine driver.

As engine drivers, both John Machin and William Mattrass were skilled men, the labour aristocracy of the railway industry, and it is likely that they would have been well-respected in the railway neighbourhood as well as in the station yard. As drivers' wives, Jane and Elizabeth should have had the security of a regular, reasonable income coming into the home although they would also have had to contend with the long and irregular shifts which their husbands worked. Both couples worked together for the Railway Mission with Jane and Elizabeth being influential in the railway neighbourhoods in which they lived whilst their husbands tried to spread the Mission message in the workplace.

Other women shown in Appendix 3 were married to upper and middle-class men who were likely to have been well-known and influential in their local communities. Voluntary religious work would have been considered a suitable occupation for these women. In addition, the support of such men, albeit through the involvement of their wives was a bonus for the Railway Mission at a time when religious and philanthropic organisations were competing for support, both practical and financial. Rose Hurnard in Colchester and, author, Florentina Shadwell, who lived in Hastings, for example, were married to JPs, men who had positions of power within their communities whilst the upper-class status of Aramintha Probyn in London and Sarah

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<sup>56</sup>1891 Census.

<sup>57</sup>1891 Census.

Sykes in Brighton were confirmed by the census description of their husbands' occupations as 'Gentleman' and 'Landed Proprietor' respectively.<sup>58</sup>

Slightly lower down the social scale were women such as Gertrude Morris in Doncaster and Margherita Whitley in Halifax. Gertrude was born in Hull in 1835; she married Richard Morris, a chemical manufacturer, in 1857 and the couple settled in Doncaster where Gertrude became well-known in religious and philanthropic circles. Her work with railwaymen began in 1879, pre-dating the formal establishment of the Railway Mission, when she held Bible classes for the men in the couple's home, Beechfield. As previously noted, she became President of the Doncaster branch in 1888; she also worked with policemen and postmen and with the men employed 'at her husband's extensive chemical works.'<sup>59</sup> Although her husband, Richard, does not appear to have had an active role in Mission work, he was on the platform at a conference hosted by Gertrude in October 1890 to mark the end of a seven-day mission held in Doncaster by Elizabeth Gates, superintendent of the Mission in Brighton. After lunch, Gertrude showed the conference delegates 'around the beautiful grounds at Beechfield' and, at a meeting following the conference, she and Richard were joined on the platform by Elizabeth Gates, Richard Nixon, Secretary of the Railway Mission, Emma Wilson, wife of Dr Christy Wilson, a surgeon at Doncaster Infirmary and Sarah Parrott from Stockton on Tees.<sup>60</sup> The couple do not appear to have had any children and their upper middle-class standing is exemplified by census information which shows that they employed a butler, a cook, a housemaid and a kitchen maid.<sup>61</sup>

The much younger Margherita Whitley, born in 1866, was married to John, a Halifax mill owner. In 1901, when Margherita was 28, the couple had two young children and they also employed a number of household staff including a cook, a nurse, a housemaid and a parlour maid. In November 1899, when her children were aged 5 and 3, Margherita became President and Treasurer of the newly-formed Railway Mission branch in Halifax. Both couples would have been well-known in these manufacturing areas of northern England with a social circle which included other

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<sup>58</sup> See census 1881 and 1891.

<sup>59</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1890, p.2.

<sup>60</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1890, p.245.

<sup>61</sup> 1881 Census.

wealthy business owners and both Gertrude and Margherita were ideally placed to raise the profile of, and support for, the Railway Mission in their local communities.

In more rural areas, men such as John Crosher, a cheese merchant employing nineteen men and six boys in Melton Mowbray<sup>62</sup> and George Mumford, a seed merchant and importer in Thorpe, Norfolk, would have also been prominent in their local communities. George's wife, Louisa, was active in the Mission branch in Norwich whilst Mary Ann Crosher (see Fig. 6) was secretary and superintendent of the Mission in Melton Mowbray. She also took responsibility for a number of outlying areas in this rural region, travelling out to talk to railwaymen at some of the very small stations where, if a Mission branch did exist, it may have had only one or two members. Mary Ann Crosher also took an active interest in the platelayers working on the construction and repair of the lines. These men had no fixed place of work but moved along the line, working on any part of the line which required attention.<sup>63</sup> This type of itinerant religious work will be discussed further in the next section.

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<sup>62</sup>1881 Census.

<sup>63</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1895, p.201.



Fig. 6 Mary Ann Crosher, Superintendent, Railway Mission, Melton Mowbray  
*Railway Signal*, November, 1895

In the rapidly growing urban areas of late-Victorian Britain, women like Mary Ann Bennett would have endorsed the respectability of Railway Mission work. Mary Ann was married to Charles, a local doctor, and the couple lived in a wealthy area of Cheltenham. Mary became superintendent of the Mission after Ethel Middlemass who, as previously discussed, moved to London following her marriage. The couple were well-regarded in Mission circles as well as in the local area and Richard Nixon, a member of the Mission national executive, stayed at their home during a visit to Cheltenham in 1891.<sup>64</sup> Although, as with a number of other married women who worked for the Mission, Mary's husband, Charles, does not appear to have played an

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<sup>64</sup> 1891 Census.

active part in Mission activities but he was sometimes present at events such as drawing room meetings and lunches held as part of a conference or Special Mission.

## **Widowed Women**

Appendix 4 shows that only 11 of the 184 women identified were widowed; in fact, only 10 women were widowed since census records show that Eleanor Leith, superintendent of the Mission branch in Horsham, was actually separated from her husband. Eleanor, who was born in France in 1837, was referred to in Mission records as widowed and she described herself as a widow in census records. However, marriage records show that she married Angus Leith in September 1861 in Surbiton. In January 1876, she filed a petition for a judicial separation from Angus on the grounds of adultery and the decree of separation was given just a year later in February 1877.<sup>65</sup> Although the Divorce Act of 1857 had given women the right to seek divorce from their husbands, divorce and legal separation was not widespread and continued to carry a stigma long after the legislation was introduced. It seems likely that Eleanor preferred to be considered a widow rather than a separated woman. Clearly from a wealthy background, Eleanor lived in Horsham with her sons Frank and George and all three were described as 'living on their own means' in census records.<sup>66</sup> Eleanor died in 1895 just six months after she had been appointed superintendent of the Mission branch in Horsham.<sup>67</sup>

As shown in Appendix 8, Caroline Ridley was the only widow with employment in addition to her Railway Mission work. She was superintendent of the Mission branch in Bury St Edmunds and, following the death of her husband, Arthur, in January 1892, took over his work as a coal, iron and nail merchant.<sup>68</sup> Her son, Spencer, initially her assistant, was shown as running the business in the census for 1911 with Caroline, then aged 65, still living with him and his wife at the family business address in the town. Caroline was instrumental in raising funds to build the Bury St Edmunds Mission Hall (see Figs. 9 and 10), working with Mr and Mrs Cook, the

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<sup>65</sup> Ancestry.co.uk, *England and Wales Civil Divorce Records 1858-1911*, accessed 25 April 2014

<sup>66</sup> 1891 Census

<sup>67</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1895, p.130

<sup>68</sup> 1901 Census

station master and his wife. Records show that she was still superintendent of the branch in 1910.<sup>69</sup>

Harriett Beckwith was a widowed woman who became the first superintendent of the Mission branch in Margate which was established in April 1890. She soon became very involved in Mission work. An editor's note in the *Railway Signal* of December 1890 noted that the meetings at Margate were going well with 'Mrs Beckwith as leader'<sup>70</sup> whilst the members rejoiced that: 'Thank God we are having great blessing with prayer meetings at our leader's home. We had a grand time on New Year's Eve; about twenty men and their wives met at our leader's home for an hour's prayer at 10pm after which we went to a Night Watch Service.'<sup>71</sup> Just over two years later, the *Railway Signal* reported that a new superintendent, Miss Hadow, had given an address in which she had referred to the good work done by her predecessor, Mrs Beckwith.<sup>72</sup> It is not clear why Harriett gave up Mission work although it is possibly because she left Margate since the census for 1901 shows that she was living in the Hampstead area of London with her stepdaughter, Alice, her daughter, Florence and her son, Cecil. There is no evidence to suggest that Harriett had any further involvement with the Railway Mission; she died in Worthing in 1920.

Blanche Kilbee was another widowed woman who worked as a branch superintendent. She was born in 1860 in Birmingham and was by far the youngest widowed woman who has been identified as working for the Mission. Blanche married Henry, an auctioneer's clerk, in the summer of 1881 in Birmingham; their marriage was very short-lived as Henry died just under a year later. Following his death, Blanche went to live with her widowed mother, Elizabeth, and her sister, Emily in Weston-Super-Mare. All three women lived independently on income from investment income.<sup>73</sup> The Mission branch in Weston-Super-Mare was set up in February 1895 and Blanche was its first superintendent. She appears to have become very active in Mission affairs and was appointed 'District Worker for the

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<sup>69</sup> RMCA Handbook 1910 RM/MISS/1/9/2.

<sup>70</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1890, p.254.

<sup>71</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1891, p.31.

<sup>72</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1893, p.74.

<sup>73</sup> Census 1891, 1901, 1911.

South Western District' just over three years later in September 1898.<sup>74</sup> This type of supervisory role will be discussed further in the next chapter. A review of Mission records for the early twentieth century shows that Blanche became superintendent of the Mission branch in Highbridge for the years 1903 to 1907. There is no record of a branch in Weston-Super-Mare during this period although Blanche continued to live there until her death in 1947 and it seems likely that the branch there may have fallen by the wayside. Mission branch records are incomplete but it seems likely that Blanche continued to be involved with the Railway Mission from 1895 when she became the first superintendent at Weston-Super-Mare throughout the twelve year period and possibly beyond.

Esther Clapham, whose husband, Henry, had been a ship owner and town councillor,<sup>75</sup> was 50 when he died leaving her his estate of over £21,000.<sup>76</sup> She lived in Newcastle on Tyne with, in 1891, her three sons and her daughter. Her eldest son, Lionel, aged 28, was a coal exporter, Norman, at 18, was a shipping clerk whilst the youngest son, Henry, was 10; he had been only 3 when his father died.<sup>77</sup> As a wealthy widow, Esther would have inhabited a social world similar to that of Gertrude Morris in Doncaster and Margherita Whitley in Halifax and, like Gertrude, Esther was involved in working directly with railwaymen as well as in the world of social gatherings, aimed at raising support for the Mission. She held, for example, a Bible class for railwaymen on Sunday afternoons at her home in Jesmond, a wealthy area of Newcastle where Helen Sharp and her husband, ship owner, Thomas, held the well-organised drawing room meetings discussed in the first Part of this chapter. Esther started her Bible class late in 1890, seven years after her husband's death.<sup>78</sup> Shortly after this, she gave a tea at Lockhart's Cocoa Rooms in the city centre for 'about forty five employees at Newcastle station' and, after the tea, she invited the men to join her Bible class.<sup>79</sup> Early the following year, Esther attended a meeting held by Rebecca Garnett, a married woman trying to start a Mission branch at nearby Tynemouth, where she and Helen Gurney, another married woman from the

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<sup>74</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1898, p.177.

<sup>75</sup> 1881 Census.

<sup>76</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk), *National Probate Register* accessed 21 May 2016.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1890, p.250.

<sup>79</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1891, p.50.

neighbouring town of Gateshead, spoke of the work which they had been doing for the Railway Mission.<sup>80</sup>

Esther also held drawing room meetings and, nine years after she had started her Bible classes, the *Railway Signal* noted that it was 'indebted to Mrs Clapham of Newcastle on Tyne for arranging drawing room meetings on behalf of the Railway Mission.'<sup>81</sup> Esther, like Gertrude Morris in Doncaster, appears to have been equally at ease in her drawing room with her social counterparts as she was with the working-class railwaymen whom she invited into her home for Bible class on Sunday afternoons. In addition, Esther, like the other widowed women, Eleanor Leith, Harriet Beckwith and Blanche Kilbee, was surrounded by her family; her three sons lived with her throughout the period under review. She, too, combined family life with Mission work. Esther died in Newcastle in 1903, just four years after the Mission's acknowledgment of her work in 1899.

This section has given a glimpse behind the names of some of the single women who worked for the Mission in the late-Victorian period; it has shown that only a very small number had paid employment and that those who did worked primarily in those areas of work traditionally assigned to women. This leads to the assumption that the majority of single women identified were economically independent or relied on family income. It has also considered the ways in which marriage could impact upon women's involvement with the Mission and has given an insight into lives of some of the married women who worked for the Mission during the period under review. It has illustrated the ways in which social standing may have helped these women in their work and how they sometimes, often strategically, involved their husbands in their Mission activity. The ways in which married women undertook work as part of a couple or family unit will be discussed more fully later in this chapter. Finally, it has shown how the five widowed women discussed here combined family life with Mission work and has suggested that they did not reflect stereotypical assumptions around widowed women taking up religious and philanthropic work to fill a void in their lives or to combat feelings of loneliness. A discussion of the reasons why women may have become involved in Mission work will be undertaken in Chapter 4.

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<sup>80</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1891, p.59.

<sup>81</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1899, p.51.

## Section 2: Age Profiles

Age profiles of the women for whom census information has been linked to Mission records are shown in Appendices 5, 6 and 7 and this section will consider the impact which age may have had upon the ways in which women worked for the Mission. Lack of detail in Mission records has made it impossible to pinpoint the age at which the majority of women first began to work for the Mission. I have therefore used census data to ascertain the year of birth and then relate that to involvement with the Mission in the years 1881-1901. This has enabled me to create a broad generational analytical framework based on five age cohorts. I have used a decennial analysis in these cohorts, women born before 1841, between the years 1842 and 1851, 1852 and 1861, 1862 and 1871 and after 1872. By far the largest group of women is those born between 1842 and 1871 and I will discuss these women as a whole but will also undertake a more detailed analysis by considering the women within each separate decennial period. These cohorts will provide the basis for linking age with other variables such as marital status and familial arrangements to create a picture of the women who worked for the Mission during this period. In particular, it will facilitate a discussion around the extent to which the cohort in which a woman was born influenced the type of work which she undertook for the Mission and the ways in which she went about her work.<sup>82</sup>

### Single Women

Appendix 5 gives the age profile for single women and shows a range of generations of women involved in Mission work over the 1881-1901 period from Jane Duranty, born in 1819 and thus already 62 when the Mission was established, to Josephine Sykes, born in 1883, two years after the Mission was formed. The majority, 61.5%, of single women working for the Mission were born between 1852 and 1872. 48 of the 136 women identified were born between 1852 and 1861 with a further 35 born between 1862 and 1871. This suggests that a large number of these single women were middle-aged, ranging from around 30 to 50 years of age, during the period in

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<sup>82</sup> For further information on the use of generational cohorts, see Olive Banks, *Becoming a Feminist*, (Brighton: Wheatsheaf Books, 1986).

which they were engaged in Mission work. In addition, a significant number were born before 1851, with 19 before 1841 and 25 between 1842 and 1851. These women must have been in their fifties and sixties when they undertook Railway Mission work. Only 9 of the women active in the Mission between 1881 and 1901 were born after 1872. In this section, I will discuss the lives of women from these age cohorts, using examples to gain some understanding of their lives and the impact of age on their work for the Railway Mission.

Harriett Gardiner (see Fig. 7), born in 1841 and part of a cohort of women who were already middle-aged when the Mission was founded, became superintendent of the Hastings branch of the Mission in 1884, almost a year after it was formed.<sup>83</sup> She lived with her two older sisters, Eliza and Amelia: little is known about the women's earlier lives although their widowed father was described as a hotel keeper in the census for 1861. As a mature woman, her involvement with the Mission seems to have been the result of her own initiative rather than family influence. Harriett appears to have suffered a serious illness two years after her appointment as branch superintendent and, when she returned to Mission meetings 'looking fragile' after an absence of five months, prayers of thanksgiving were said for her recovery.<sup>84</sup> Sickness and women's physical weakness were common themes in *Signal* reports and the ways in which women were perceived to be physically weak will be discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis.

Following her recovery, Harriett's involvement with the Mission seems to have intensified. She led a concerted effort to raise funds to build a Mission Hall in Hastings, using her influence with her friends and acquaintances. In March 1889, for example, she arranged a Sale of Work, opened by the Countess of Chichester, to raise funds for the Hall. She engaged the services of Mrs Malpass, the station master's wife, to have a 'depot close to the entrance door' and for 'a long line of ladies to preside over the stalls which were tastefully arranged' with 'many articles upon them (which) were exceedingly pretty.'<sup>85</sup> In addition to selling goods at the Sale of Work, many of Harriett's acquaintances were involved in making the goods to be

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<sup>83</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1884, p.176.

<sup>84</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1886, p.220.

<sup>85</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1889, p.144.

sold. As an independent middle-class woman, Harriett was able to attract support for the Railway Mission effort from a large number of women ranging from the Countess of Chichester to Mrs Malpass, the station master's wife. Some of these women are likely to have belonged to the women's auxiliary which Harriett established in Hastings. As already explained, women were not able to have full membership of the RMCA but were able to form auxiliaries to support Mission effort. Harriett established the auxiliary 'for the purpose of sending *The Signal* to various station in Sussex.'<sup>86</sup> Women in the auxiliary were given the names and addresses of a number of railwaymen who had expressed interest in receiving communications from the Railway Mission. Each woman would buy copies of the paper each month and send them to the men on her list, sometimes with a short covering letter. In this way, the Railway Mission was able to make contact with men working on branch lines, perhaps some distance from the Mission branch and also with men who worked alone on the line, such as signalmen. It also meant that the cost of the *Signal* was borne by the women in the auxiliary and not by the working-class railwayman. Harriett's network of middle-class women was essential to this kind of Mission effort. In addition to the standing which Harriett appears to have had amongst the middle-class social and religious circles of Hastings, she also seems to have been well thought of by the Mission executive. In 1892, for example, she was asked to help with the establishment of the Mission's convalescent home in Hastings and, when Florence Dolby offered her services as superintendent of the Home, Albert Head, Secretary to the Mission executive, was requested 'to consult with Miss Gardiner and report back;' he was also instructed to 'consult Miss Gardiner as to Rules for Convalescent Home, day of opening and furnishing.'<sup>87</sup>

Harriett continued working for the Railway Mission until a few months after her marriage on 1 March 1894. At the age of 53, she became the third wife of the 75-year-old former sugar merchant and magistrate, Conrad Finzel. In October 1894, she resigned her position of superintendent when she and Conrad moved to live in Devon where he died nine years later in 1903. Harriett appears to have retained her link with the Mission in Hastings; she is noted, for example, as giving a talk at the

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<sup>86</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.4.

<sup>87</sup> RM Minutes 8 January 1892 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

Spring Tea Party in May 1908<sup>88</sup> and her death in November of the same year was noted in the *Railway Signal* when she was credited with ‘the means of having the beautiful Railway Mission Hall erected which will be a permanent memorial to her energy and love for the work.’<sup>89</sup> By the time of her death, she had been connected in some way with the Mission in Hastings for a period of twenty-four years, from middle age through to old age, with perhaps a break during her period of married life in her fifties.



Fig. 7 Harriett Gardiner, Superintendent, Railway Mission, Hastings  
*Railway Signal*, January 1890

Mary Briggs, born in 1852, was eleven years younger than Harriett. She was the only surviving daughter of Isaac and Sarah Briggs who also had three sons. Burial records show that she had a sister, Fanny, who was born in 1856 but died at the age

<sup>88</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1908, p.137.

<sup>89</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1908, p.228.

of 3. Mary's father, Isaac, was a prominent woollen merchant in Wakefield and all three sons followed him into the woollen industry. Isaac was also involved in railway construction with an obituary note in the *Railway Signal* describing him as 'one of the pioneers of Railway construction. He took a deep interest in the spiritual welfare of railway navvies and their families and arranged Gospel meetings and Sunday schools for them in those early days'<sup>90</sup> suggesting that fathers, as well as mothers, could involve their daughters in Mission work. The ways in which other women were involved with their fathers in Railway Mission work will be discussed later in this chapter.

The family was well known in the Wakefield area: following his work as a railway contractor, Isaac built Rutland Mills in the centre of Wakefield as a worsted spinning mill where more than a hundred people were employed.<sup>91</sup> An article about Mary in the *Railway Signal* described the 'early Christian influence' of her home and how she began to teach at Sunday school when she left school although she had to give this up when her mother became ill.<sup>92</sup> This was not an unusual situation; as the only living daughter, the care of her mother would have fallen to Mary but, following her mother Sarah's death in August 1884, when Mary was aged 32, she seems to have immersed herself in Mission work supported by both her father and her brothers with whom she continued to live. They attended Railway Mission meetings and made a room available at Rutland Mills 'in which the afternoon class was held and which was always ready every Sunday afternoon.'<sup>93</sup>

Mary described work for the Railway Mission as 'her life work'<sup>94</sup> and, despite several bouts of illness, she embraced it fully. In April 1890, she provided a 'substantial tea for about 160 railwaymen and their wives';<sup>95</sup> the following year, when it was decided to open a Mission branch at nearby Mirfield, she spoke at a meeting arranged to raise interest and support<sup>96</sup> and, in September 1892, she organised the first Railway Mission conference held at Wakefield at which the Rutland Mills Brass Band

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<sup>90</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1910, p.28.

<sup>91</sup> [www.wakefieldhistoricalsoc.org.uk](http://www.wakefieldhistoricalsoc.org.uk) accessed 30 January 2014.

<sup>92</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1894, p.20.

<sup>93</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1890, p.89.

<sup>94</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1894, p.20.

<sup>95</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1890, p.88.

<sup>96</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1891, p.84.

played.<sup>97</sup> Early in 1897, she started a mother's meeting group at the Mission branch in Wakefield<sup>98</sup> and, like Harriett Gardiner, she arranged bazaars and Sales of Work. At such an event in November 1899 which Mary organised and, at which 'there was a large attendance,' Mary 'gave interesting details of the Railway work in Wakefield.'<sup>99</sup> Through her work with the Mission, Mary spoke at large-scale public events, became involved in conferences throughout the area and was responsible for the administration of the branch, dealing with the accounts, reporting at annual meetings as well as constantly trying to raise funds.

In all of this activity, she was supported not only by her family but also by her social circle in the Wakefield area. These included women such as Mary Mackie, who lived near to Mary and Isaac in the Sandal area of Wakefield with her husband, John, a retired corn merchant and JP for Wakefield. Mary Mackie's sister-in-law, Edith, the daughter of Robert Mackie who, in 1881, was the town's Member of Parliament<sup>100</sup> also supported Mary Briggs in her Railway Mission work. The wealth of these families was exemplified by the number of servants they had. Isaac and Mary Briggs and John and Mary Mackie each had three servants whilst Edith Mackie, who lived alone in 1891, employed a cook, a lady's maid, an upper housemaid, an under housemaid, and a kitchen maid.<sup>101</sup> It was also illustrated by their estates; in 1910, when Isaac Briggs died, for example, he left an estate worth £43,338 11s 2d.<sup>102</sup> Mary was able to use these networks of wealthy friends and acquaintances to promote and finance Railway Mission activities. She lived up to her promise to make the Railway Mission 'her life work;' records show that she was still superintendent of the Mission in Wakefield in 1910, twenty-six years after she had first become active in the Mission.<sup>103</sup> Through her consistent efforts, and the support of her family and friends, she established a Railway Mission branch which was successful for a long period of time. Unlike Harriett Gardiner, she never married and she remained in

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<sup>97</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1892, p.228.

<sup>98</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1897, p.37.

<sup>99</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1900, p.235.

<sup>100</sup> 1881 Census.

<sup>101</sup> 1891 Census.

<sup>102</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) National Probate Register accessed 12 June 2015.

<sup>103</sup> RMCA Annual Reports RM/MISS/1/5/1.

Wakefield until her death in 1943. She was buried with her mother, father and Fanny, the sister who died as a child.<sup>104</sup>

This discussion has shown how two single middle-class, middle-aged women worked for the Railway Mission. They were able to use wealth and social connections in, and for, their activities for the Mission. The situation of some younger women who worked for the Mission was different and reflected the changing social and cultural changes of the late-nineteenth century when, in line with work in the wider commercial world, a small number began to be paid for their work with the Mission. Although many women continued to work voluntarily for the Railway Mission, this small, but notable, move to paid work, marked a significant change in Mission practice. The next part of this discussion on single women and age will focus on Margaret Casswell, an example of a younger woman employed by the Mission, who was born in 1878 in Grantham.

In 1891, Margaret was living with her father Henry, a corn merchant, her mother, Mary and her eight brothers and her younger sisters in Boston, Lincolnshire.<sup>105</sup> By this time, Margaret's two older sisters, Ruth and Amy, had left the family home. In September 1897, when Margaret was 21-years-old, she was appointed as a paid 'worker' for the Mission in Leeds to work alongside another single woman, Jane Gilder.<sup>106</sup> Margaret and Jane soon became involved in work in the wider area; both women, for example, went to a meeting in nearby Halifax, arranged to discuss the opening up another Mission branch.<sup>107</sup> In March 1899, Margaret was moved to become superintendent of the Mission's branch in Bradford<sup>108</sup> where, nine months later, she was joined by her older sister, Ruth, as her assistant.<sup>109</sup> Margaret began to attend Mission conferences representing the Bradford branch, going, for example, to a two-day conference held in Worcester on 13 and 14 January 1900 where she 'gave addresses and led prayers' throughout the conference.<sup>110</sup> In the following year, she sang at a two-day celebration of the third anniversary of the branch in Halifax

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<sup>104</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) *Find a Grave*, accessed 8 July 2016.

<sup>105</sup> 1891 Census.

<sup>106</sup> RM Minutes September 1897 RM/MISS/1/2/2.

<sup>107</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1898, p.216.

<sup>108</sup> RM Minutes March 1899 RM/MISS/1/2/2.

<sup>109</sup> RM Minutes November 1899 RM/MISS/1/2/2.

<sup>110</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1900, p.34.

which she had been involved in founding<sup>111</sup> and, later that year, she played a leading role in a Special Tent Mission held in York to try and raise interest in the formal establishment of a Mission branch in a city well-known for railway work but where there had been difficulty in attracting support for a Railway Mission branch.<sup>112</sup> The Tent Mission appears to have been successful as, later that year, Margaret was appointed as superintendent of the newly-formed Mission branch in York.<sup>113</sup> Margaret stayed in York for three years, spending a total of seven years employed by the Mission before resigning her position in 1904 as she was 'going to India to be married.'<sup>114</sup>

This brief discussion of Margaret Casswell's work with the Railway Mission shows that, in contrast to the single women voluntary workers, she could not rely on her family's wealth or social standing in her Mission work. She did not live in the family home but was moved to different locations to meet the Mission's needs and lived, firstly, as a lodger in Leeds and Bradford and, upon her transfer to York, in the YWCA hostel.<sup>115</sup> She was not referred to as a 'Lady Superintendent' or as our 'Lady Friend,' terms frequently used to describe wealthy middle-class women. Instead, Margaret Casswell was a 'worker' in the Mission; the *Railway Signal's* reports of her work were far more down to earth and reflected her status as a young woman who was paid for her work with the Mission. I will discuss the situation in respect of paid work and the Casswell sisters more fully in Chapter 4. The final part of this discussion will focus on Josephine Sykes, one of the youngest women involved in Railway Mission activity.

Josephine, born in 1883 and thus part of the youngest cohort identified in the records, was the daughter of Sarah Sykes, discussed earlier in this chapter. Josephine was noted as first attending a meeting of the Mission branch in Brighton at the age of 13 when she was on the platform at the laying of a memorial stone to mark the building of classrooms next to the Brighton Mission Hall, shown at Fig.2. Early involvement with religious and philanthropic work would have been an integral

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<sup>111</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1901, p.56.

<sup>112</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1901, p.126.

<sup>113</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1901, p.235.

<sup>114</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1904, p.217.

<sup>115</sup> Census 1891 and 1901.

part of Josephine's education. As Dyhouse notes, 'many a daughter served an apprenticeship alongside her mother in organising, bazaars, charity teas and the like.'<sup>116</sup> Despite the social developments of the late-Victorian period, there was clear continuity of the religious, philanthropic practice of the early-nineteenth century which, as Twells suggests, 'provided evangelical girls and women with a powerful sense of their own agency and influence in the world.'<sup>117</sup> The teenage Josephine, lived in a household which, although it was wealthy, was also one of age and sickness. In 1901, when she was 17 and her father, Joseph, 88 years old, census records show that the family employed the services of two 'hospital nurses (sick),' as well as a cook, parlour maid, two housemaids, a kitchen maid, and a companion.<sup>118</sup> It seems likely that the companion, 29-year-old Elizabeth Alexander, would have been engaged as a companion for Josephine. She stayed with Sarah and Josephine when the two women moved to Sunningdale, Berkshire following Joseph's death in 1905.<sup>119</sup> Josephine, like Sarah Parrott in Stockton on Tees, married a clergyman, Hector MacLean, in 1912 and when, six years later, Sarah, her mother died, Josephine and Hector returned to Sussex, settling in Horsham where Hector died in 1959 and Josephine in 1971. There is no evidence to suggest that Sarah or Josephine continued to be involved in Railway Mission work after they left Brighton.

## Married Women

The birth dates of married women working for the Mission during the period under review span a fifty-year period. The oldest, Emily Bennett, who held drawing room meetings in Plymouth, was born in 1820 whilst Mission supporter, Rose Hurnard in Colchester, was born fifty years later. However, as Appendix 6 shows, over 75% - 28 of the 37 married women identified - were born before 1852. This compares notably with just 32% of the single women identified in the same age cohort. Only 6 married women were born between 1852 and 1861 and 3 in the decade between 1862 and 1871. This section will focus on the extent to which household and childcare

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<sup>116</sup> C Dyhouse, 'Middle Class Mothers and Daughters, 1870-1914', in *Labour and Love: Women's Experience of Home and Family 1850-1940*, J Lewis, (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), p.39.

<sup>117</sup> A Twells, *The Civilising Mission and the English Middle Class 1792-1850*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2009), p.98.

<sup>118</sup> 1901 Census.

<sup>119</sup> 1911 Census.

responsibilities may have impacted upon women's involvement with the Railway Mission.

Census data shows that the three adult daughters of Brighton Mission superintendent, Elizabeth Gates, born in 1828, were at the family home in 1881, just three years after Elizabeth began her work with railwaymen, with two, Mary and Florence, still there in 1901. Annie, the other daughter, had married in 1889. Elizabeth thus had an adult family by the time she began her work for the Railway Mission and would not have had the childcare and domestic responsibilities of other women in the Mission. In contrast, Margaret Wedgewood in Hockley, born in 1831, had nine children living at home in 1881, four of whom were of school age and, in 1891, in addition to the four children who were still living at home, Margaret also had a 17-year-old railway guard as a lodger. Despite her domestic responsibilities, Margaret worked for a number of years for the Railway Mission, often with the younger men. Her work will be discussed more fully in Chapter 3. Missioner Elizabeth Knight, born in 1833, had four sons, aged between 4 and 18, living at the family home in Deptford, London in 1881 and Mary Ann Crosher, born in 1848 and superintendent of the Mission in Melton Mowbray, had the care of two young children in 1881 with two more in 1891. Another missioner, Rebecca Garnet, who was born in 1854, had her first child in 1881 whilst the family were living in Cambridgeshire: by the time the family had moved to Tynemouth, where she held meetings for railwaymen, three more children had been born. Similarly, the younger Helen Sharp, born in 1862 and living in nearby Newcastle, was 29 at the time of the census of 1891 when she had three young children aged between 5 and 11 months. As discussed in Part 1 of this chapter, Helen held drawing room meetings on behalf of the Railway Mission. For these women, home responsibilities do not seem to have had a significant impact upon their involvement with the Mission.

Clearly, women with adult children like Elizabeth Gates would have had fewer responsibilities than those with young children; perhaps, of greater significance, however, is the fact that the majority of these women, as discussed earlier, were middle-class women with sufficient family income to employ domestic help to facilitate their participation in Railway Mission work. Elizabeth Gates employed a cook, a housemaid and a parlour maid in 1881, Mary Ann Crosher had two servants

in 1881 and a governess and two general servants in 1891. Margaret Wedgewood, whose husband, Robert, was a railway superintendent, and perhaps not as well paid as the husbands of some of the other women, had only one general servant, but, as was common practice in large families, it is likely that some of the older children in her family would have helped with the care of their younger siblings. The two younger women living in north east England also employed help in the home; the census for 1891 shows that Rebecca Garnet had a nurse and a housemaid whilst Helen Sharp employed a cook, a housemaid and two nurses to help look after her young family.

Nevertheless, the fact that such a small number of younger married women was involved in Mission work suggests that home and childcare responsibilities may have impacted upon the ability of some women to take up Railway Mission work, especially if their ability to employ domestic help was limited. Equally, it is possible that work with the Railway Mission may not have been attractive to the young married women of the late-nineteenth century who may have considered their roles as wives and mothers to have been more important to them. This glimpse into the lives of the very small number of married women who did take up the work with the Railway Mission suggests that the availability of domestic help may have been more of an influential factor than that of age. The ways in which married women worked as part of a couple or larger family unit will be discussed later in this chapter.

## **Widowed Women**

As would be expected, the widowed women shown in Appendix 7, were, on the whole, older than their single and married counterparts. Four of the women identified were born in the 1820s, meaning that they were in their sixties and seventies during the period under review. It is not surprising to find that they undertook the more peripheral aspects of Railway Mission work and were not involved in the more demanding roles such as branch superintendent. One woman, Elizabeth Pollard, born in 1825, stands out as defying this trend. Elizabeth, known as Betsey, held the positions of president and superintendent at the Wisbech branch of the Mission. She was shown as superintendent of the branch in 1904, just one year before her death at the age of 80. Her life and work will be discussed further in Chapter 4. Of the

remaining seven women shown as widows, four were born in the 1830s including the separated Eleanor Leith and Harriett Beckwith who, as discussed, both held the position of branch superintendent. Two women, Caroline Ridley, the Mission superintendent who took over the running of the family business in Bury St Edmunds and well-known speaker Mary Cambie (see Fig. 13) were born in the 1840s. Mary's work with the Letter and Packet Mission will be discussed in the following chapter. Blanche Kilbee, born in 1860, superintendent of the Weston-Super-Mare branch was, as discussed, by far the youngest widow identified as working for the Mission.

Age may also have been a factor in why so few widows were identified as working for the Railway Mission. A larger number of widowed women may have been involved in more peripheral support type roles but, because of the low profile of this type of work, they may not have featured in Mission reports. Cultural ideologies may also have been an issue; older women may have been influenced by popular cultural notions of the mid-Victorian period in which women involved in religious and philanthropic activity were expected to focus their work on women and children. Work with men in the newly-formed organisation of the Railway Mission may have challenged established notions of both class and gender and considered to be too avant-garde by some older women.

This section has shown the ways in which age differential could influence the types of work which women undertook for the Mission. It has also illustrated, in broad terms, how marital status may have combined with age to determine the extent to which different generations of women became involved in Mission work.

### **Section 3: The Personal Networks Within Which Women Carried out Work for the Mission**

In the final section of this chapter, I will consider the personal relationship networks in which women carried out Railway Mission work. As the Appendices show, these include the family, the household, the couple, the friend and working alone. These divisions are somewhat arbitrary and may have changed over time, sometimes as women became more involved in the work. I have based my research on information given in Mission records which recorded women's activity with the Mission and on

the more personal information given in census data. The aim of this section is to achieve a greater understanding of women's involvement with the Railway Mission and the ways in which they approached Mission work. Under the heading of 'family,' I have included all types of familial arrangements. These range from mother and daughters, mother and son, father and daughter, siblings, aunt and niece to those families where several members were involved in Railway Mission work. For 'household,' I have included those women who shared a home with no evidence of a familial relationship but where both women worked for the Mission. The heading of 'couple' refers to married couples where it is clear that both husband and wife were actively involved in Railway Mission work. The term 'friendship' applies where involvement with the Mission depended on friends who seemed to work together consistently and where it seemed likely that one would not have undertaken the work without the other; it does not apply to the more common situation where women in the Railway Mission were supported by their friends or where friendships arose from a common involvement with the Mission. The term 'alone' is difficult to define since records suggest that most women worked within a network of friends and acquaintances but it is used to cover women who did not fit into the categories above because they did not work closely with specific relatives or friends. The Appendices show that very similar numbers worked alone and as part of a family; 88 of the 184 women identified worked alone whilst 78 worked as part of a family; this applies equally to single, married and widowed women. Breaking this down further, the Appendices show that equal numbers of single women worked alone and within a family unit with 63 in each category. 19 of the married women worked alone, 10 worked as part of a family and 8 as part of a couple. Of the widowed women, 6 worked alone and 5 worked with their families. Only single women deviated from these three categories with 6 working as part of a household arrangement and 4 who worked together but lived separately.

## **Family**

The large number of women working within the framework of the family covers a number of relationships and, in this section, I will discuss Frances Ellison and her family in Liverpool, Emily Ellis and her father, Robert, and the women of the Scott family in Eastbourne. These examples discuss three different types of family

arrangement. Frances Ellison worked primarily with her father, illustrating the ways in which a father and daughter became involved in the work. Emily Ellis also worked closely with her father, Robert, a railwayman and provides a good example of work within a railway family, whilst the Scott family provides a perhaps more common pattern of religious philanthropy in the period in which women from two generations of the same family worked together.

Frances Ellison (see Fig. 8) was born in 1861; she was the oldest of five daughters living with their accountant father, John, and their mother, Mary, in the West Kirby area of Liverpool. Frances was often ill and, at times, appears to have been a semi-invalid. She first began working with the Railway Mission as a 'Silent Messenger,' sending copies of the *Railway Signal* to a small group of railwaymen. She began more active work with the Mission in West Kirby in 1886 and soon became superintendent of the branch.<sup>120</sup> Her father, John, acted as chairman at Mission meetings and her sister, Margaret, often attended meetings, sometimes singing a solo. It is interesting to note that her mother, Mary, appears to have had no involvement with the Railway Mission. Perhaps, as the mother of five daughters, one of whom was often ill, and with only one servant in 1881 and none in 1891,<sup>121</sup> she had little time for Mission work. Frances and John ran regular meetings for railwaymen and Frances appears to have been helped by other women. In 1889, for example, she invited the men to meetings on 22 and 23 January: 'Miss F.B. Ellison sent invitations to the men; 102 and 70 respectively attended with Mr J.F. Ellison in the Chair. A substantial tea was provided on each evening by the lady workers - - - and Miss Ellison spoke a few words on the last night.'<sup>122</sup> With the help of friends and acquaintances, Frances raised enough money to build a Mission Hall, opened in 1891.<sup>123</sup>

Frances was often absent from meetings because of illness but seems to have undertaken Mission work from home. In April 1890, the branch report noted that the members were 'hopeful of having our faithful superintendent, Miss F.B. Ellison, amongst us as the weather becomes warmer. We pray that God will soon restore her

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<sup>120</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1895, p.178.

<sup>121</sup> Census 1881 and 1891.

<sup>122</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1889, p.48.

<sup>123</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1895, p.178.

in health and strength.<sup>124</sup> Almost a year later, at the opening of the new Mission Hall, she was only just well enough to attend the meeting chaired by her father and was 'also able to say a few words for which she was deeply grateful.'<sup>125</sup> Her health deteriorated and, in 1894, when the weather was 'very bad,' the men were encouraged to attend meetings at the Ellison family home,<sup>126</sup> presumably, when Frances was too ill to go out. A report in the *Railway Signal* confirmed that Frances had been 'practically an invalid for several years through an affliction of the chest' and 'though not able to leave her room for several weeks at a time, she kept in constant touch with the Railway people by correspondence and through a little band of visitors she had organised.'<sup>127</sup> Frances died in September 1897 at the age of 34 and, at her funeral, 'Upwards of 100 railwaymen walked in procession whilst others carried the body the whole distance.'<sup>128</sup>

Frances had been superintendent of the Railway Mission for over ten years and had worked with her father throughout that time. The Ellison family were highly regarded and railwaymen asked her sister, Margaret, to take over as superintendent so that 'the name may be preserved in connection with the leadership of the branch.'<sup>129</sup> Margaret seemed undecided but eventually accepted the position in February 1898.<sup>130</sup> John Ellison continued to chair Mission meetings but Margaret's position as superintendent was short-lived; she was replaced by a Mrs Mason just nine months after her appointment.<sup>131</sup> Her decision to leave the Mission may have been related to her forthcoming marriage to coffee merchant, Edwin Green, whom she married in April 1899. Margaret also died at a young age, just seven years after her marriage at the age of 41.

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<sup>124</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1890, p.66.

<sup>125</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1891, p.42.

<sup>126</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1894, p.37.

<sup>127</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1897, p.190.

<sup>128</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1897, p.194.

<sup>129</sup> *Ibid*, p.194

<sup>130</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1898, p.37.

<sup>131</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1899, p.17.



Fig. 8 Frances Ellison, Superintendent, Railway Mission, West Kirby  
*Railway Signal*, September 1895

This example of Frances, John and Margaret shows how members of the same family worked together for the Railway Mission; Frances and John, in particular, were very committed to the Mission. Having the support of her father meant that Frances could continue with the work during her frequent illnesses: John appears to have been the conduit through which Frances could work when she was confined to the house and seems to have facilitated the meetings which were held at the Ellison home during the cold winter months. After Frances died, John worked with Margaret for the short period during which she took leadership of the Mission branch. Mary, the third sister, was shown as an auxiliary member of the RMCA in 1892<sup>132</sup> but there is no evidence that she took an active role in Mission affairs or that the two other

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<sup>132</sup> RMCA Handbook, 1892 p.166 RM/MISS/1/9/2.

sisters were involved with the Mission. Although part of a larger family, it is clear that Frances, like Mary Briggs in Wakefield, worked particularly closely with her father.

The next example is of another close father and daughter relationship, that of Emily and Robert Ellis, a railway family. Like Frances, Emily was the oldest child in the family. Born in 1868, she had a younger sister, Edith, and three younger brothers. The family lived in Norwich where Robert was a Goods Manager on the Great Eastern Railway. In addition to his involvement with the Railway Mission branch in Norwich, Robert was also very active in local Methodism. He was treasurer for the East Anglian district, a senior steward in the Norwich circuit and acted as treasurer for several Methodist chapels. He was an executive committee member of the local YMCA and the St John's Ambulance Brigade.<sup>133</sup> He clearly took an active role in religious and philanthropic work and, in his involvement with the Mission, he had 'an indefatigable helper in his daughter, Miss Ellis, who has for several years taken an active share in the work of the Mission. She visits the Railway people in their homes and runs class for boys and also young women.'<sup>134</sup> In addition to religious instruction, her class for young women made articles for the Sales of Work held by the Mission branch. In June 1895, the branch held a farewell meeting for Robert and Emily as, owing to Robert's promotion, the family was moving to London where Emily wasted little time in becoming involved in Railway Mission work and where, in October 1895, the Bishopsgate branch was 'glad to welcome Miss Ellis, late of Norwich, who has kindly promised to take up work amongst us.'<sup>135</sup> She seems to have made an impact at the first meeting which she organised; the room 'was crowded' and 'the men listened most attentively to the homely earnest address which Miss Ellis gave.'<sup>136</sup> As in Norwich, she was joined by Robert at the meeting and Emily went on to represent the Bishopsgate branch at a conference held in Cambridge in October 1896, speaking at a public meeting on the opening day.<sup>137</sup> Emily and Robert also worked together in the wider area; they both spoke, for

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<sup>133</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1894, p.207.

<sup>134</sup> *Ibid*, p.207.

<sup>135</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1895, p.217.

<sup>136</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1896, p.37.

<sup>137</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1896, p.215.

example, at the annual meeting of the Wood Green and Hornsey Railway Mission branch on 26 May 1897.<sup>138</sup>

Records show that Emily continued with her work for the Mission well into the twentieth century. In 1906, for example, it was reported that she was holding meetings for the men in the mess rooms at Bishopsgate,<sup>139</sup> and, two years later, she addressed a meeting of the Norwich branch at which she was described as President of the Bishopsgate branch and 'in the days gone by, as one of our active workers.'<sup>140</sup> Robert retired from the railway in 1910 and died in London in 1918<sup>141</sup> whilst Emily appears to have returned to Norwich where she died in December 1941.

While Robert and Emily worked closely together in Mission work, both in Norwich and London, there is no evidence to show that any other members of the family were involved. The father/daughter collaborative relationships between Robert and Emily and John and Frances Ellison are interesting at a time when the gendered division of roles was still the norm especially, as in both cases, their mothers were still alive but had no obvious connection with the Mission. Interestingly, Gleadle found similar evidence of working relationships between fathers and daughters earlier in the nineteenth century, noting that, typically, it was the eldest daughter who worked with her father.<sup>142</sup> Both Emily and Frances were the eldest daughters and it is possible that they, in some way, stood in for their mothers who may have been too occupied with domestic and childcare duties to take up Railway Mission work. The bond that united these women with their fathers was their shared religious belief and joint evangelical activity.

These examples illustrate family relationships which developed from, and because of, a common participation in religious activity outside of the home. They also show the ways in which women could develop Railway Mission work from, and within, the family. Perhaps the fact that these women were working primarily with men facilitated their joint endeavours with their fathers. They are, nevertheless, interesting

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<sup>138</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1897, p.97.

<sup>139</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1906, p.17.

<sup>140</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1908, p.17.

<sup>141</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) UK Railway Employment Records 1833-1956, accessed 15 July 2016.

<sup>142</sup> K. Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens. Women, Gender and Political Culture in Britain 1815-1867* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.110.

because they do not follow the common stereotypical assumptions of women working together for, and with, other women in religious philanthropy.

The final example of women working within the family unit follows a more stereotypical model of philanthropic work centred around collaboration between female family members of the Scott family in Eastbourne. In 1886, Janet Scott, who was born in Bombay in 1863, founded, and became the first superintendent of, the Railway Mission branch in Eastbourne. Her father, James, was a civil engineer and it seems probable that he was working, and the family living, in India at the time of Janet's birth. In 1870, her sister, Edith, who also became involved in Railway Mission work, was born in Bristol and, one year later, the family was shown as being in Scotland where her mother, Anne, had been born.<sup>143</sup> Following James's death, the somewhat itinerant family settled in Eastbourne and the census for 1881 shows that the widowed Anne, Janet, Edith, their younger sister, Maud, and Jessie, the 59-year-old sister of James, all shared a home with their six domestic servants. By 1890, whilst Janet was leading Railway Mission activities, Edith formed a choir to sing at Mission meetings and events.<sup>144</sup> A report later that year suggested that their Aunt Jessie had also become involved although, by then, she had moved into her own house; 'Miss Scott, Miss J.B. Scott and Miss E. Scott are now leaders of the Mission.'<sup>145</sup> The women became well-known in Railway Mission circles, attending, for example, the prestigious annual meeting of the Brighton branch held in The Dome, Brighton in December 1890<sup>146</sup> and a meeting in the railway town of Ashford where the musical Edith sang a duet with the Ashford branch superintendent, Mary Noyes.<sup>147</sup> In May 1892, Janet, at the age of 29, married Dr Charles Roberts, a 27-year-old General Practitioner and among the '150 costly presents were a handsome timepiece and a pair of ornaments from members of the Mission.'<sup>148</sup> Following their marriage, Janet and Charles moved to Essex and Edith continued to lead Mission work in Eastbourne. In January 1893, for example, she sang and led the prayers at the first quarterly meeting of the branch<sup>149</sup> and, by October 1897, with her aunt, she

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<sup>143</sup> 1871 Census.

<sup>144</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1890, p.181.

<sup>145</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1890, p.228.

<sup>146</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1891, p.15.

<sup>147</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1891, p.48.

<sup>148</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1892, p.120.

<sup>149</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1893, p.63.

had set up a Temperance Society connected with the Mission branch. Jessie Scott opened the society's first meeting whilst Edith took the chair.<sup>150</sup> Janet and Edith's mother, Anne, did not appear to play a leading role in Mission meetings but was busy behind the scenes raising money particularly for the Railway Mission's convalescent home. In 1897, when Edith and Jessie were establishing the Temperance Society, she was collecting donations by writing 'not only to personal friends but also to strangers appealing for contributions to the Home.' She raised a significant amount, sending a cheque for £100 for the Building Fund.<sup>151</sup> As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Anne Scott was also involved in meeting the cost of Mary Noyes's salary when she was appointed to the Ashford branch of the Mission.

The three women continued with Railway Mission work well into the twentieth century. The extent of Edith's work is exemplified by branch reports in which she was referred to varyingly as branch leader, secretary, superintendent, and president. Jessie died in January 1907 at the age of 84 and an obituary in the *Railway Signal* described her work for, and interest in, the 'Railway people' and the way in which this was acknowledged at her funeral. A procession of railwaymen 'most of them in uniform found time even on the busiest day of the week to follow her funeral procession.'<sup>152</sup> Edith's mother, Anne, died two years later and her death was reported in the Editor's notes in the *Railway Signal* when she was described as 'one of the most active and devoted friends of the Mission since it was established.' The note also described Anne's interest in, and support for, her daughter, Edith's, work for the Railway Mission and the considerable financial assistance which Anne had given to the Mission's convalescent home.'<sup>153</sup>

This family of women combined their religious fervour with their wealth to make a significant contribution to Railway Mission work. Their involvement with the Mission continued throughout, and beyond, the period under review and has provided a perhaps more conventional illustration of the ways in which women within a family unit worked together for the Mission. They resemble, in many ways, the women

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<sup>150</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1897, p.190.

<sup>151</sup> *Ibid*, p.190.

<sup>152</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1907, p.25.

<sup>153</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1910, p.8.

whom Twells<sup>154</sup> described as working together in religious philanthropy during the earlier years of the nineteenth century. What differentiates their work from much of that in the earlier period is that their work focused around, and upon, working-class railwaymen rather than on women and girls; the elements of continuity, however, after decades of economic, social and political change, are notable.

## **Married Couples**

This section will focus on another form of family unit, that of the married couple, through the example of William and Gertrude Marriott who worked together for the Railway Mission throughout the period under review. William, born in France in 1857, trained as a civil engineer and was involved in the construction of the Midland and Great Northern Railway in Norfolk where he became concerned for the welfare of the navvies working on the line. He arranged accommodation for the men and also set up a reading and billiard room for them. In 1884, he was appointed superintendent of the Eastern and Midland Railway and organised education for the young men in the company, and 'for one afternoon, in the company's time, a class for workshop mechanics.'<sup>155</sup> He also worked with other local men such as Robert Ellis and George Mumford to provide religious services for railwaymen.

In 1885, William married 24-year-old Gertrude Rouse in Bromley, Kent. Gertrude came from a wealthy family; the census for 1881 shows that her father, Robert, was a colonial banker and that Gertrude was the second of six children. The family employed eight servants and, in his reminiscences, William recorded that Melton Constable was such a 'wild place' that the managing director of the railway company agreed to provide him with rent-free accommodation if he 'settled to live in such an outlandish and forsaken place - - - so, in 1885, I started to live on the spot among the men and my good wife left her beautiful London home to share my fortunes in what was then the "wilds of Norfolk"'.<sup>156</sup>

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<sup>154</sup> A Twells, *The Civilising Mission*.

<sup>155</sup> *Forty Years of a Norfolk Railway. The Reminiscences of William Marriott from 1884 to 1924*. (Norfolk: M&GNJRS Publications, 1974), p.24.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid*, p.7.

The couple, who had six children, settled in Norfolk and immersed themselves in Railway Mission work almost immediately. Just two months after their marriage in the spring of 1885, the Mission reported that: 'through the kindness of Mr and Mrs Marriott, the Sunday scholars and parents enjoyed a trip to Caistor.' 46 children and 40 adults 'sat down to dinner and tea in a plantation adjoining the field where there were swings, cricket, racing, donkey riding etc.'<sup>157</sup> In December that year, they gave a tea for 'about 170' people and the report in the *Railway Signal* praised their work: 'if everyone had friends like Mr and Mrs Marriott we should see great change in some places.'<sup>158</sup> Their work seemed to attract a large following. In January 1889, for example, the *Signal* reported that, at a mission held the previous November, 'our highly esteemed friends, Mr and Mrs Marriott, provided about 450 persons with a sumptuous tea in the Goods Warehouse.'<sup>159</sup> A similar meal was given the following year with the *Signal* report being keen to emphasise that this was a 'free tea,' again held in the Goods Warehouse, to which 'Railwaymen and their wives from all parts of the line were invited and between four and five hundred sat down.'<sup>160</sup> After the meals in the warehouse which was decorated for the occasion, William and Gertrude entertained railway families in the grounds of their home. In August 1898, 'about 230 scholars and their mothers sat down to tea which was very kindly provided by Mr and Mrs Marriott at The Grange, Brinton. During the afternoon, the children enjoyed themselves in swinging, boating, bathing and in races of various kinds' at the annual Sunday School festival.<sup>161</sup> These events must have continued for many years. In 1987, a commemorative booklet was published to mark the centenary of the Melton Constable Mission branch in which a letter from a Mrs Enid Clark described her memories of the branch, highlighting her trips to The Grange. 'The wagonette trip to the Marriott's home in Brinton was our Sunday school treat. We had great fun with games, races and a "tug-o'-war" with tea in the barn.'<sup>162</sup>

William spoke at Mission meetings in the area, working closely with George Mumford in Norwich; Gertrude attended some of these meetings although there are few references to her addressing meetings. She did speak at a meeting held on Good

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<sup>157</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1885, p.200.

<sup>158</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1886, p.19.

<sup>159</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1889, p.7.

<sup>160</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1890, p.25.

<sup>161</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1898, p.197.

<sup>162</sup> Melton Constable Railway Mission Commemorative Leaflet, p.5 RM/MISS/2/5/13

Friday 1888 when 'she exhorted the wives of the men to give their hearts to God and to bring the children up in His fear.'<sup>163</sup> She also played the organ at meetings. She seems to have been more involved in work with women and children than in addressing railwaymen directly and she and William worked well together in this way. Records suggest that William had a good relationship with the men, both at work and in the Mission. He showed concern for their spiritual, as well as their physical, welfare, suggesting that: 'man being a complex being cannot, if he is to be a complete or full grown man, neglect the spiritual side of his being without grave danger'<sup>164</sup> and he appears to have been a sympathetic employer. 'If one is to do one's duty as a "Captain of Industry", one must not treat the men as machines but as human beings.'<sup>165</sup> This was a refreshing outlook in the often harsh working conditions of Victorian railway employment.

Little is known about Gertrude's early life but records illustrate the way in which she fully embraced Railway Mission life after her marriage. She, unlike many other women in the Mission, does not appear to have been closely involved with the men: this was William's strength. Gertrude complemented William in Mission work. She was involved in Sunday School work, she organised the large-scale teas, she attended meetings with her husband and used the musical skills which she, no doubt, gained as a girl, to play the organ at Mission events. She ran a busy household with, for example, four servants in 1891 when, in addition to her four children under the age of six, she also had a lodger, a 19-year-old student of engineering who, presumably, worked, or had contact, with William.

William and Gertrude illustrate the ways in which a couple could work together for the Railway Mission. Unlike some of the couples discussed earlier like John and Mary Ann Crosher in Melton Mowbray and Mary Ann and Charles Bennett in Cheltenham, where the women worked for the Mission with occasional support from her husbands, William and Gertrude had equal and complementary roles. Although William was well-known to the men as Locomotive Superintendent and as Superintendent of the Melton Constable Mission branch, Gertrude was regularly

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<sup>163</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1888, p.95.

<sup>164</sup> *Forty Years of a Norfolk Railway*, p.10.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid*, p.28.

mentioned in Mission reports and the fact that reference was consistently made to 'Mr and Mrs Marriott' exemplifies and confirms that this was a joint commitment with both Gertrude and William working to develop and establish a successful Mission branch. As well as being a couple, William and Gertrude were, of course, also a household unit and, in the next section, I will discuss two women, Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks, as an example of women working together as part of the same household.

## Household Unit

Jane Loud, born in 1839, lived in Buckland, near Dover. Her father, George, had been a farmer with a significant amount of land at Buckland. George died in the inter-census years between 1861 and 1871 when census data shows that Jane was living at Buckland with her widowed mother, Mary, and her 34-year-old sister, Georgiana. Mary died just after the 1871 census was taken and Georgiana died at the age of 44 in 1880. Jane inherited the large family home in Buckland where, in 1881, she was living alone with her two servants although, at the time of the census, two of her cousins were paying her a visit.

Ruth Maddicks was born in 1847, her father, John, was a mason and quarryman.<sup>166</sup> The family does not appear to have been wealthy and, by the time of the 1871 census, Ruth was working as a schoolmistress. Ten years later, she and her older sister, Alexandrina, were running a small 'ladies school' in Charlton, Kent with three pupils aged between 8 and 16.<sup>167</sup> This type of school, often run by impoverished, middle-class women, was not uncommon in Victorian England and, interestingly, Margaret Gerds, the *Railway Signal* author, also ran a girls' boarding school with nine pupils in Reigate, Surrey. Robinson describes these types of schools as 'more concerned with cultivation than education – offering nothing more than a place to deposit your daughter for a while.'<sup>168</sup> For women like Alexandrina and Ruth Maddicks, however, their school provided a necessary income in a society which offered few employment opportunities for less wealthy, middle-class women.

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<sup>166</sup> 1861 Census.

<sup>167</sup> 1881 Census.

<sup>168</sup> J Robinson, *Blue Stockings. The Remarkable Story of the First Women to Fight for an Education*, (London: Penguin Books, 2010), p.57.

Jane Loud appears to have been involved in religious work before the founding of the Railway Mission. A report in the *Railway Signal* of February 1889, referred to Jane as 'a dear Christian friend of ours' who 'has worked for the Master in the same district for ten years yet seeing very little result.'<sup>169</sup> She seems to have become involved with the Railway Mission in the mid-1880s, inviting railwaymen to tea at her home in the autumn of 1888.<sup>170</sup> A note in the *Railway Signal*, referring to a celebratory meeting held on 20 November 1906 to mark the twenty-first anniversary of the Mission branch in Dover, suggests that Dover was one of the early Mission branches to be established and that Jane was involved from its inception.<sup>171</sup> It is not clear when Ruth Maddicks became involved with the Mission but a report in September 1889 referred to her as 'our dear friend Miss Maddicks (of the Dover branch).'<sup>172</sup> In the same year, Jane paid for a Mission Hall to be built at Buckland to accommodate about two hundred people.<sup>173</sup> Although not specifically stated, this hall appears to have been provided for general mission work at Buckland and made available to the Railway Mission. Jane held events for railwaymen at her home; in July 1889, for example, Mission members 'had a great treat through the kindness of Miss Loud who invited us again to tea on her lawn and afterwards inside to hear an address by Mr Nixon.'<sup>174</sup> Jane seems to have adopted the role of benefactor and also to have acted as a facilitator for the Mission. 'The work in Miss Loud's new hall at Buckland is still attended with blessed results. The Mission members have taken turns in giving addresses there at the invitation of Miss Loud and a Sunday school has been started by some friends with good results.'<sup>175</sup> Jane was not taking these meetings herself but providing others with the facilities to do so.

It is not clear whether Jane and Ruth met through their work for the Railway Mission. In the census for 1891, Ruth is shown as Jane's employee, working as her companion and it is possible that Ruth's involvement with the Mission arose from this connection. In October 1890, both women attended a high-profile meeting at Ashford

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<sup>169</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1889, p.26.

<sup>170</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1888, p.186.

<sup>171</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1907, p.18.

<sup>172</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1889, p.171.

<sup>173</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1889, p.26.

<sup>174</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1889, p.149.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid*, p.149.

as representatives of the Dover branch along with local dignitaries and the General Secretary of the Railway Mission.<sup>176</sup> Jane continued to give tea and garden parties for the men. In July 1895, for example, over 100 members attended the annual tea held in the 'beautiful gardens at Bucklands' and, notably, they were invited by 'Miss Loud and our leader, Miss Maddicks.'<sup>177</sup> The two women were clearly considered to be working together and Ruth's role as leader of the branch was confirmed. At a tea held the following year, Ruth addressed the men after the entertainment provided 'by Miss Loud in the gardens of Bucklands'<sup>178</sup> whilst, at the gathering in July 1899, 'Miss Loud, with our dear leader, Miss Maddicks, entertained the members of the Railway and Buckland Missions at the tea in Miss Loud's beautiful gardens at Buckland.'<sup>179</sup> The close working relationship between the women was clear: Jane continued to work as benefactor, facilitator and enabler whilst Ruth had the day-to-day running of the Mission branch. There was also a nuanced reminder that, although the women worked and lived together, Jane owned Buckland and the men were there at her invitation and because of her goodwill. The relationship between Jane and Ruth worked well: they, like William and Gertrude Marriott, worked as a team with complementary roles.

Ruth continued to live with Jane at Buckland and is shown in the census for 1901 as Jane's 'boarder.'<sup>180</sup> Shortly after the census was taken, she gave up her work for the Railway Mission because of 'ill health and pressing work at Buckland Mission Hall.'<sup>181</sup> It seems likely that she and Jane also pursued this wider, religious philanthropic work together. In 1911, 64-year-old Ruth was still living with Jane, then 72, and was described in the census as her 'friend.'<sup>182</sup> This type of relationship was not unusual in the Victorian period. Jane was clearly wealthy enough to support herself whilst Ruth needed to work and the census records discussed above initially described Ruth as Jane's 'Companion/Domestic Servant.'<sup>183</sup> The role of companion was common; it was work available to, and considered suitable for, middle-class,

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<sup>176</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1890, p.231.

<sup>177</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1895, p.157.

<sup>178</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1896, p.158.

<sup>179</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1899, p.175.

<sup>180</sup> 1901 Census.

<sup>181</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1901, p.237.

<sup>182</sup> 1911 Census.

<sup>183</sup> 1891 Census.

impoverished women. Vicinus classes work as a companion as one of three occupations open to 'genteel poor women,' the other two being a governess or a seamstress.<sup>184</sup> As noted earlier in this chapter, the young Josephine Sykes in Brighton had Elizabeth Alexander as her companion for a number of years whilst, when Gertrude Morris, President of the Mission in Doncaster, retired to the seaside town of Hove, she employed Mary Harris, thirty years her junior, as her companion/domestic servant.<sup>185</sup> Both Jane and Gertrude employed other domestic staff and the role of companion is likely to have been considered to have had higher status than that of other servants. Following the 1911 census, Ruth appears to have moved from Dover. She died in Andover, Hampshire in 1915 whilst Jane outlived her by seven years, dying at Buckland in March 1922.

Jane and Ruth built a relationship of friendship and mutuality through their mission work which they developed within a household unit. In the next section, I will consider two other women, Jane Caldecott and Beatrice Long who worked closely together but who lived separately. Their relationship was similar to that of Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks although, as the next section will show, differences did arise.

## Friendship

Jane Caldecott was born in Lowestoft in 1832 and, following the death of her brother Barnes in 1862 and her father, also Barnes, a 'Landed Proprietor'<sup>186</sup> in 1868, she settled in Oulton, Suffolk with her mother, Catherine, and her younger sister, Helen.<sup>187</sup> Following Helen's marriage to clergyman, Augustus Copeland, in 1879 and Catherine's death in 1886, Jane, described as a 'Gentlewoman',<sup>188</sup> remained in the family home in Oulton. Beatrice Long lived in Norfolk where she had been born in 1849, with her father, Henry, the vicar of Newton Flotman and her mother, Charlotte.<sup>189</sup> After Henry's death, Charlotte and Beatrice moved to the nearby town of Gelderston and subsequently to Oulton where Jane lived. Jane and Beatrice soon began working together for the Railway Mission in ways similar to those of Jane

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<sup>184</sup> M Vicinus, *Independent Women. Women, Work and Community*, (London: Virago Press, 1985), p.3.

<sup>185</sup> 1911 Census.

<sup>186</sup> 1851 Census.

<sup>187</sup> 1871 Census.

<sup>188</sup> 1881 Census.

<sup>189</sup> 1881 Census.

Loud and Ruth Maddicks. On Whit Monday, 1891, for example, the Bible Class of the Mission branch at Tivetshall had their annual outing, travelling by train and then by boat ‘across Oulton Broad to the residence of Miss Caldecott (one of our leaders) where we were warmly received by both our leaders, Miss Long and Miss Caldecott.’ The group had lunch there after which they were joined by Mission members from ‘Lowestoft, St Olave’s Junction, Oulton and elsewhere.’ There was a ‘grand testimony meeting’ in a large tent in the garden and Miss Caldecott and Miss Long ‘provided an excellent tea’ following which Miss Long played the harmonium.<sup>190</sup> The two women seemed to have been involved in a number of Railway Mission branches: following the Whit Monday tea, they visited the branch at St Olave’s Junction where their visit gave the branch ‘a little heaven upon earth.’<sup>191</sup> They were invariably referred to as a couple; the Lowestoft branch, for example, reported that ‘the Misses Caldecott and Long have taken three Sunday nights in succession’<sup>192</sup> and, on Whit Monday 1892, the Bible Class was again invited by ‘our esteemed leaders, Miss Long and Miss Caldecott, to Oulton Broad cottage, the residence of Miss Caldecott.’<sup>193</sup> The term ‘cottage’ may have been misleading as about 120 people had their tea in the gardens. In August of the same year, the ‘first children’s treat’ was given: ‘the Misses Caldecott and Long gave the children, their teachers and their wives, a tea at the residence of Miss Caldecott at Oulton Broad.’<sup>194</sup> Other reports used the same terminology, referring to the *Misses* Caldecott and Long and one was very seldom mentioned without the other.

Jane and Beatrice worked closely together in their Railway Mission activities and the similarities between Jane Caldecott and Beatrice Long and Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks are apparent. In both cases, one woman owned the property at which the regular, large-scale entertainment was held and in which both women were involved. There are also differences. There is no evidence to suggest that either Jane Caldecott or Beatrice Long became branch superintendents but they did address meetings; Jane Loud, however, does not seem to have done this although Ruth

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<sup>190</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1891, p.159.

<sup>191</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1891, p.178.

<sup>192</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1891, p.228.

<sup>193</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1892, p.157.

<sup>194</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1892, p.198.

Maddicks often addressed both classes and meetings in her role as branch superintendent in Dover.

On a personal level, census records, as discussed, suggest some degree of class difference between Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks but this does not appear to have been the case with Jane Caldecott and Beatrice Long. The relationship between Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks seems to have developed from economic necessity when Jane employed Ruth as her companion. Jane Caldecott and Beatrice Long, however, appeared to have formed a more equal friendship. Beatrice seems to have been financially independent and was described, for example, as 'Living on own Means' in the census for 1891. They did not take up Mission work as part of a household unit like Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks but as part of a personal friendship and from separate homes although they did start to share a home when they left Oulton. A review of Mission records has enabled me to pinpoint the time when the women began to live together. A report in the *Railway Signal* for February 1902 stated that Jane had moved to Torquay about seven years previously and it seems likely that she and Beatrice moved after the death of Beatrice's mother in December 1895. They moved to Cockington, near Torquay in an attempt to improve Jane's health and there they shared a house which, as a reminder of their former home, they called 'Oulton House.'<sup>195</sup> When Jane died in 1902, her will showed that she left an estate worth £9,374 1s 3d<sup>196</sup> with probate to Beatrice and a barrister, Frederick Hughes. Beatrice continued to live at Oulton House after Jane's death until she died there in April 1913 when her estate was valued at £14,367 19s 4d,<sup>197</sup> confirming the assumption of her economic independence.

These two examples have shown how women worked together for the Railway Mission and how friendship could develop from their shared activity. Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks worked as part of a household unit whilst I have described Jane Caldecott and Beatrice Long as working through a relationship of friendship although ultimately they, too, came to share a home. Interestingly, both pairs of women were of similar ages; both Jane Loud and Jane Caldecott were born in the 1830s whilst

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<sup>195</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1902, p.30.

<sup>196</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) National Probate Register accessed 20 May 2016.

<sup>197</sup> *Ibid.*

Ruth and Beatrice were born in the following decade. They were growing up in a society which, as discussed, still found single women something of a problem and these examples show how, through their work for the Railway Mission, these women constructed lives which gave them worthwhile activity, companionship and friendship.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has provided a broad insight into women's work for the Railway Mission between 1881 and 1901. Part 1 has described the types of work which women undertook and has shown how some women worked behind the scenes without crossing the gendered, ideological space between women and working-class men whilst others braved these boundaries to create space for themselves within the male-dominated enclaves of Victorian railway employment. Part 2 of the chapter has considered the impact of women's personal circumstances. It has shown that, although the majority of women working for the Mission during this period were middle-aged, middle-class single women, there were significant variations between the women identified in age, background and lifestyle. It has discussed the ways in which these variations could impact upon women's work and has provided an insight into the ways in which women developed friendships through their Railway Mission work. In particular, it has shown how their work could influence their lifestyles and living arrangements. Significantly, it has also illustrated the extent to which work with the Railway Mission enabled evangelical women to construct lives which combined religious belief with work in a period of economic, political and social change so that they, like many other women, were able to undertake occupation, albeit generally on a voluntary basis, outside of the home.

The next chapter will consider the strategies which women used in their efforts to take religion to the vast railway workforce of late-Victorian Britain.



Fig. 9 Railway Mission Hall, Bury St Edmunds

<https://commons.wikimedia.org>



*The Railway Mission and Station, Bury St Edmunds.*

*Clement Marsh.*

Fig. 10 Sketch of Bury St. Edmunds Hall, showing proximity to Railway Line

Miscellaneous Railway Mission records, newspaper cutting, date unknown

## **Chapter 3**

### **Women's Mission Strategies**

This chapter will discuss some of the strategies which women adopted to forward their work for the Railway Mission. It will focus on evangelism, communication and the use of late–nineteenth century technological modernity. These strategies will be considered separately although, in reality, women combined them in their Mission work. The chapter will discuss these strategies in the context of the cultural and technological changes of the late-nineteenth century.

Part 1 will concentrate on the ways in which women used established evangelical practice in their attempts to convert railwaymen. It will focus on religious belief, prayer, benevolence, kindness and maternalism. Part 2 will discuss strategies of communication, firstly considering the use of agency as a means of reaching the men. By agency, I mean engaging the help of Christian railwaymen to encourage their workmates to become members of the Railway Mission. This is the domestic equivalent of the 'native agency' used by missionaries working in the foreign mission field. Part 2 will then move on to the ways in which women used speech and the written word to communicate their messages of evangelism. It will examine women's use of the efficient postal system which evolved during the mid-nineteenth century to reach large numbers of men, and will also consider women's adaptation of railway terminology as a means of attracting the men's attention. The final Part of this chapter will discuss the ways in which women used the technological development of the railway system to build networks of support and administration and the extent to which travel became an inherent feature of Railway Mission work.

#### **Part 1: Evangelical strategies**

The cultural beliefs which endorsed women's spirituality gave them, as Davidoff and Hall argued, a sense of religious superiority over men with responsibility for the

religious well-being of family members and those in the wider community.<sup>1</sup> It also, as Twells has suggested, was fundamental in the construction of an identity which gave women spiritual authority over others, particularly those in the lower echelons of society considered to be in need of religious redemption.<sup>2</sup> The first section of this Part of the chapter will consider the ways in which women used this authority in their efforts to convert railwaymen. It will discuss the extent to which women gained strength from their own religious convictions to support them in their work with working-class men. This, for many middle-class women, presented a particular challenge as they were more used to evangelical work with working-class women and girls and work with working-class railwaymen involved the additional problem of crossing gender, as well as class, divisions. The section will consider the ways in which women took a more holistic approach, aiming both to improve the men's spiritual belief and make them 'better' men, both at home and at work and, finally, it will explore the important part that women's belief in the power of prayer played in their work for the Mission.

The second section will also consider the ways in which women befriended the men and how they worked to cross cultural divides through strategies of kindness and benevolence. It will also discuss women's use of maternalism, based upon ideological notions of home and family, to build meaningful relationships with railwaymen.

### **Section 1: Spirituality, Respectability and the Power of Prayer**

Records suggest that a significant number of women were initially reluctant to undertake work for the Railway Mission because they were apprehensive about their ability to evangelise working-class men. However, they drew strength from their own deep religious faith. Lavinia Grayson (see Fig. 11), for example, decided against becoming superintendent of the Mission in Bradford but later agreed because 'God seemed to lead her so clearly towards it' and, still doubtful of her ability, decided to

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<sup>1</sup> Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes. Men and Women of the English Middle Class 1780-1850* (London: Routledge, 2005).

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, A Twells, 'Happy English Children. Class, Ethnicity and the Making of Missionary Women in the early Nineteenth Century' in *Women's Studies International Forum*, Vol.21 No.3 (1998) pp 235-245.

rely 'on Christ's power.'<sup>3</sup> Mary Noyes chose to 'follow God's leading' believing that 'He had called her to work there for Christ and His Glory'<sup>4</sup> when asked to take over the failing branch at Ashford, Kent. Women also used their personal religious belief to support them in their work for the Railway Mission, especially during difficult times. Florence Norris in Deal, for example, told how 'the Lord had led her into the work' and 'in conscious weakness, she commenced visiting a few of the men's houses and not long afterwards, when a meeting was asked for, she shrank at the thought but the Lord overcame and supplied her every need.'<sup>5</sup> Work with the Railway Mission increased her confidence and, in 1896, she became a missionary with the China Inland Mission.



Fig. 11 Lavinia Grayson, Superintendent, Railway Mission, Bradford  
*Railway Signal*, October 1893

Strength of religious belief and detailed religious knowledge gave women the confidence to hold Bible classes and other religious meetings for the men and some, like Alice Coker in Brighton, also wrote long religious articles for the *Railway Signal*. This combination of spiritual belief and religious knowledge was not limited to middle-class women. Jane Machin, the engine driver's wife in Burton-on-Trent, for

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<sup>3</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1890, p.182.

<sup>4</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1890, p.231.

<sup>5</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1894, p.235.

example, wrote detailed religious articles for the paper. Fervent religious belief also encouraged less-educated, working-class women to write. Elizabeth Gates, for example, praised a poem, 'The Workman's Plea,' which, she said, had been written by a 'poor woman who lived in a cellar in London. She just wrote down the lines as God gave them to her as well as she was able. She was not educated but God gave her the talent.'<sup>6</sup> The work of this woman, Edith Mailing, born in 1841 and married to Richard, a hawker, will be discussed later in this chapter.

This belief that God could work through women was another way in which women drew on their spirituality to find the courage to engage in missionary work. Alice Boardman, a young woman who became superintendent of the Mission branch in Stratford, London, felt that 'the Lord had given a direct message to deliver to the Enfield people'<sup>7</sup> whilst Mary Skipton, a well-known speaker at Mission events, was 'full of the Holy Ghost' at a meeting in Reading in February 1889 when 'God owned and blessed her work.'<sup>8</sup> Women spoke of the ways in which their belief had been endorsed and enhanced by these feelings of God's guidance and approval. Betsey Pollard in Wisbech 'often shrank from the work but God led her on and the blessing had been great'<sup>9</sup> whilst Elizabeth Gates in Brighton said that 'if I have been the means of God's blessing on others, I have been blessed myself.'<sup>10</sup> This feeling of collaboration with God and of working directly to God's will gave women the confidence to go into the unknown masculine spaces of railway employment and the courage to enter mess rooms, depots and goods yards to address large groups of railwaymen. Committed personal spiritual belief was an essential strategy for women working for the Railway Mission.

Women used spiritual belief and authority to 'improve' the men. Christianity, they believed, should be evidenced in all aspects of the men's lives. They should become 'better' men because of their religious belief, conversion was the key to a respectable life. Sobriety was seen as fundamental to respectability by the vast majority of Mission workers. The Railway Mission was not a temperance

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<sup>6</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1890, p.43.

<sup>7</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1893, p.149.

<sup>8</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1889, p.120.

<sup>9</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1891, p.224.

<sup>10</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1889, p.53.

organisation but it promoted and supported temperance activities and some Mission women were also active in temperance organisations. Mary Gorham, for example, a single woman in her thirties, was an active missionary in Tonbridge who also held the position of Superintendent of the Evangelistic Department of the Church of England Temperance Society and was Treasurer of the British Women's Temperance Association.<sup>11</sup> She travelled extensively holding temperance meetings and was also prominent in Railway Mission circles. In an announcement about a four-day 'Gospel Temperance meeting' which she was to hold in West Brompton, the *Railway Signal* noted that 'she was well-known by Railwaymen in other districts.'<sup>12</sup> Elizabeth Gates in Brighton supported temperance and, in March 1897, Edith Scott, superintendent of the Mission in Eastbourne, established and became superintendent of a temperance society which she affiliated to the Mission branch. A detailed study of late-Victorian temperance activity is outside the scope of this thesis but records do suggest that other women in the Railway Mission were also involved in temperance work and that they encouraged railwaymen to become teetotal. Figure 4, for example, shows that there was a coffee tavern immediately next to the Railway Mission Hall at Westbourne Park, London.

Conference reports provide examples of the ways in which women tried to use temperance as a route to the conversion of railwaymen. In 1893, the 'Lady Superintendent of R' said that 'some very unlikely men had been converted,' giving the example of a platelayer 'who had been reduced through drink from the position of carriage examiner. He was always drinking and would not allow me to speak to him. However, one day I got hold of him and after a talk, he signed the pledge. It was not until four months after that he was converted. He is now living a bright Christian life, doing all he can to lead others to Christ.'<sup>13</sup> Conversely, women also saw conversion as the first step in changing the men's behaviour. A Liverpool delegate at the Mission's conference in 1891 said that conversion had not only made the men temperate but had caused 'bad language to cease'<sup>14</sup> whilst another from Manchester went further claiming that members of the branch at Longsight were 'total abstainers

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<sup>11</sup> *The Women's Journal*, 6 December, 1894.

<sup>12</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1886, p.267.

<sup>13</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1893, p.117.

<sup>14</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1891, p.111.

from alcoholic drink, tobacco and snuff.<sup>15</sup> This type of testimony was common although it should be noted that Mission reports highlighted success stories and it is impossible to gauge the numbers of railwaymen whom women were unable to convert or persuade to change their behaviour.

Awareness of danger and the possibility of sudden death was inherent within railway culture and thus preparation for the possibility of accidental death in order to ensure eternal salvation was an equally important feature of evangelism. Mary Noyes, for example, was credited as 'having been the instrument in God's hands in saving precious souls and preparing them for eternity.'<sup>16</sup> The *Railway Signal* frequently published reports of fatal accidents which had occurred at work and, in these, the horror of these events was often secondary to the issue of whether the victim had been converted and thus assured of eternal life. In January 1885, for example, Inspector John Hayden, was injured whilst on duty at Norwich. He died shortly afterwards 'in the presence of his wife and children leaving them with the blessed reality that he was ready and the Lord took him.' At a Mission meeting held on the evening of his funeral, his death was used as a reminder to the men of the need to be prepared 'should the call come in a like manner.'<sup>17</sup> There was a similar response to an accident in Wellingborough later that year when Inspector Goodwin and railwayman Colin Brown 'were dashed to pieces by the 3.29 express from Leicester to London without a moment's warning.' Again, a reminder was given. 'Unsaved reader, apply this incident to yourself. How would you have fared if this had been you?'<sup>18</sup> The horror of the incident was emphasised by the dramatic nature of the report, reflecting the Victorian enthusiasm for sensationalism, exemplified in the Dickens railway story, *The Signalman*.<sup>19</sup>

The threat of sudden death was a strategy which women used to emphasise the need for conversion and women were quick to respond when there was an opportunity for last-minute conversion. Elizabeth Gates, for example, was instrumental in the bedside conversion of a man badly injured in an accident at

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<sup>15</sup> *Ibid*, p.113.

<sup>16</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1893, p.231.

<sup>17</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1885, p.56.

<sup>18</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1885, p.273.

<sup>19</sup> C Dickens, *The Signalman*, (London: Profile Books, 2015), first published 1866.

Brighton. She visited the man, praying with him and leading prayers for his soul at a Mission meeting held later that day. When she was recalled to the hospital that evening, she prayed with the man who 'was saved' before he died.<sup>20</sup> Elizabeth also promoted the idea that a holistic approach to spirituality led to fewer accidents claiming that 'accidents did not happen so frequently when drivers had given themselves to God because they always had a steady hand.'<sup>21</sup> Here we see religious belief, temperance, responsible behaviour and respectability being inextricably linked.

Women's belief in the power of prayer and in divine intervention was a fundamental part of their spiritual authority. As discussed earlier, women followed spiritual guidance in their deliberations about Mission work. Women like Caroline Ridley in Bury St Edmunds specifically used prayer for God's affirmation of her decision to work for the Railway Mission but Alice Boardman, the woman in her twenties who became superintendent of the Mission's Stratford branch, initially prayed that 'the Lord may block up the road but He didn't and since then, the work has been a blessing to myself.'<sup>22</sup> Alice and her sister, Annie, went on to work for the Railway Mission in the London area for a number of years. Women believed strongly in prayer, with testimony showing how closely they followed its edicts. Perceptions around women's spiritual authority meant that their prayer was considered to be especially powerful. The prayers of Ellen Pepper, superintendent of the Railway Mission branch in Salisbury, were, for example, credited as leading to the existence of the branch. 'It was owing entirely to her prayerful efforts that the Salisbury mission was started and has been carried on to the present day'<sup>23</sup> whilst the personal prayers of Miss Pearce in Dover were perceived as leading to the successful conversion of a number of men: 'All those she prayed for have been saved one by one.'<sup>24</sup>

Women also gained support through praying with others. When Edith Tilby started work at Clapham Junction, she was concerned that she had no experience of

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<sup>20</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1883, p.240.

<sup>21</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.11.

<sup>22</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1897, p.111.

<sup>23</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1883, p.172.

<sup>24</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1886, p.33.

evangelical work with men and distressed when nobody turned up for her first meeting. She went to Mildmay, a well-known institute established by William Pennefather in 1860 which provided training for women involved in evangelical work, and asked the women to pray with her for success at Clapham Junction.<sup>25</sup> Edith went on to have a successful career with the Railway Mission. Elizabeth Gates used prayer extensively and encouraged men in the Brighton Railway Mission to do likewise. She exemplified the power of prayer in her recollection of a man who had attended a tea meeting in the early days of the Mission: 'He was not on the Lord's side so she knew what danger he was in.' She prayed for him herself and also with the Mission group in Brighton. He eventually converted and, several months after the tea meeting, she had the good news that the man had 'given his heart to God.'<sup>26</sup>

Other women in the Railway Mission also taught and encouraged the men to pray and Mission records are full of reports of men using prayer in their meetings. They prayed for more members, for a 'lady leader' when they did not have one, and for her continued leadership and wellbeing when they did. Women and Mission members also prayed for more practical help. Railwaymen in the Dover branch prayed for the Mission Hall provided by Jane Loud in 1889 and Harriett Gardiner asked branch members to pray that 'the Lord would manifest His will and open the way for a strengthening of the work' when the branch needed £1,000 to build a Mission Hall in Hastings. She subsequently advised them that she had been given £500 by a friend towards the cost<sup>27</sup> and, after a further £376 had been collected, that 'it is now the subject of earnest prayer that a suitable site for the building may be found.'<sup>28</sup>

Towards the end of the period under review and, as the number of branches grew, women began to form support networks. Mary Briggs in Wakefield, for example, was able to draw upon these networks for help with prayer. In 1899, she invited workers from Railway Mission branches in Yorkshire to a prayer conference at which they discussed the problems they were experiencing in Mission work. They found it 'most helpful to lay these difficulties unitedly before Lord, seeking His guidance and

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<sup>25</sup> For further discussion on this type of institution, see Mangion, CM, 'Women, Religious Ministry and Female Institution Building.'

<sup>26</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1883, p.237.

<sup>27</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1881, p.233.

<sup>28</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.3.

wisdom in dealing with them.<sup>29</sup> The development of this type of network will be discussed in more detail in Part 3 of this chapter.

## **Section 2: Benevolence, Kindness and Maternalism**

Women in the Railway Mission combined spirituality with benevolence and kindness. Railway employment offered reasonable levels of pay and longevity of employment so that women in the Mission were less involved with alleviating poverty than those undertaking religious philanthropy elsewhere. This section will not consider this more usual form of benevolence but will focus on women who made investments of time in, and showed concern for, the men. It will provide an alternative view of evangelism as always strict and harshly demanding in its approach. It will suggest that successful conversion often resulted from a personal approach in which women demonstrated an interest in railwaymen as individuals through regular contact with them and that building up relationships with the men often provided the route to success.

A good example of this approach is given in a booklet giving the history of the Railway Mission. Telling the story of a Goods Foreman 'who had been prayed for and had evaded the Gospel for as long as he could,' the narrative describes how a 'voluntary girl was all out to win his soul.' When he saw her in the town, he avoided her by going into the nearest public house: 'He peeped through the door until the young Mission leader had gone by. A big Railwayman afraid of a slip of a girl whom God had blessed!' The foreman was eventually converted and, 'in her own drawing room, she had the joy of leading him to Christ.' Following the foreman's death many years later, 'that one-time girl visited his grave.'<sup>30</sup> This narrative neatly encapsulates comparisons between women's spiritual strength and masculine physical prowess. It creates a comparison between the image of the woman, the term 'young girl' suggesting small stature and physical weakness, and the much bigger, stronger, mature man. It tells how the Mission leader showed determination, spiritual strength and authority in engaging the man whilst her personal concern is demonstrated by her invitations into her home to talk one-to-one with him. Visiting his grave suggests

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<sup>29</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1899, p.235.

<sup>30</sup> *Fifty Years of the Railway Mission 1881-1931*, author unknown RM/MISS/1/9/8.

an enduring care for the man and this type of approach provided a welcome alternative to the harsh authoritarianism of Victorian railway culture. Hendrickson suggests that a similar approach, adopted by women in their work with soldiers, had greater success than the harsh discipline of army control. Women, he claims, tried to change the men 'from within,' appealing 'not to efficiency or even to the manly but to cultural forms of femininity they believed the men would understand and to which even soldiers might be expected to be open: mother, home, domesticity and female purity.'<sup>31</sup>

Welcoming the men into their own homes was another part of this approach. When Margaret and Gulielma Binyon entertained men from the Worcester branch in 1891, they did 'everything in their power to make everyone happy'<sup>32</sup> and, when the men in the Leicester branch travelled to Glen Hall at the invitation of Emma and Fanny Walker, they were met and welcomed by the two sisters, their brother, Theodore, a hosiery manufacturer, and his wife, Annie.<sup>33</sup> Two years later, draper Clement Boardman, 'gave a few words of hearty welcome' to the men at the garden party held by his daughter, Alice, superintendent of the Railway Mission in Stratford, at their family home, Magnolia House.<sup>34</sup> Entertainment was an important part of middle-class Victorian culture and the welcome into these wealthy, middle-class homes and gardens must have been a pleasant diversion from the everyday lives of Mission members. It was also a public display of kindness towards these working-class men.

The men seemed to particularly appreciate the intimacy and domesticity of the home. Referring to the middle-aged Jenny Chitham in Colchester as 'our kind superintendent,' railwaymen invited to her home in October 1896 had a 'very delightful time' and enjoyed their 'bountiful supper.'<sup>35</sup> Jenny lived with her widowed mother, Fanny, and her younger sister, Lizzie. Both sisters worked as teachers and their home is likely to have been more modest than Glen Hall in Leicester or Magnolia House in Stratford. They do not appear to have had any domestic help so presumably would have prepared the 'bountiful supper' themselves. The men

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<sup>31</sup> K Hendrickson, 'Winning the Troops for Vital Religion. Female Evangelical Missionaries to the British Army 1857-1880', in *Armed Forces and Society*, 23-4 (1997), p.615.

<sup>32</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1891, p.199.

<sup>33</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1891, p.228.

<sup>34</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1893, p.169.

<sup>35</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1896, p.218.

responded well to the sisters' efforts and to the homeliness of the occasion held in a far more welcoming environment than that of meetings held in the formality of the Railway Mission Hall or the utilitarianism of the station waiting room. The domestic setting reinforced notions of family, care and kindness.

Evangelism in the home was not new. Twells, for example, refers to early nineteenth-century religious philanthropy as 'missionary domesticity'<sup>36</sup> and shows how women's work emanated 'from and within their own home and local community' in her study of the Read family in Sheffield.<sup>37</sup> In 1866, Josephine Butler, the well-known campaigner against the Contagious Diseases Acts, took a number of the prostitutes she met whilst visiting the workhouse in Liverpool into her own home as an act of religiously-inspired kindness<sup>38</sup> and, just seven years later, Agnes Weston, a woman who undertook religious work with sailors in Devonport, invited young naval recruits into the home of her co-worker, Sophia Wintz. Having previously invited them to social events at the local Mechanics' Institute, she had far more success in the domestic setting. 'The very word "kitchen" spelt comfort and home' with the boys 'cramming the kitchen, sitting on the floor and window-sills when the benches were full.'<sup>39</sup> Realising the impact of the domestic setting, she opened 'Sailors' Rests' in Devonport in 1876 and in Portsmouth in 1881 to provide a 'home-from-home' for sailors whilst they were not at sea. Both homes had a refreshment bar, dormitories, baths and smoking, dining, reading and billiard rooms. Louisa Daniell opened a similar home in Aldershot for soldiers. She also wanted to provide a welcoming environment, an idealised notion of home and women's place within it. Using a combination of spirituality and kindness to befriend the men, the domestic setting provided a sharp contrast to the starkness of the barracks and military authority in the first steps to conversion.<sup>40</sup> The Railway Mission had no accommodation of this kind until Emma Saunders, the single, middle-aged superintendent of the Mission in Bristol, established the Railwaymen's Institute near to Temple-Meads station in 1910. During the early years of the Railway Mission, women expressed domestic religious benevolence through the use of their own homes or in the decoration of

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<sup>36</sup> A Twells, *The Civilizing Mission*, p.7.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid.*, p.98.

<sup>38</sup> See J Jordan, *Josephine Butler*, (London: John Murray, 2001).

<sup>39</sup> A Weston, *My Life Among the Bluejackets*, (London: James Nisbet & co., 1896), p.86.

<sup>40</sup> K Hendrickson, 'Winning the Troops for Vital Religion.'

buildings such as the Mission Hall or a railway building to represent the home when they entertained the men at social gatherings.

Women expressed kindness in other ways. Emma Saunders, for example, became known as 'The Railwayman's Friend' because of the extent of her work and her keen interest in the welfare of railwaymen. In addition to religious texts, she gave a small handmade gift such as flowers, a shell card or a lavender bag to the men as she visited them when 'each man received a hearty handshake and enquiry after his welfare.'<sup>41</sup> Conscious of the men's privacy, she only visited them when requested to do so but became so popular that she had to develop a visiting round which encompassed all the railway departments in Bristol city centre and extended 'until every line out of Bristol was traversed – and every inch on foot – for a radius of some miles.' She visited the men when they were ill and, when she came across a man with toothache, she arranged for him to have treatment with her own dentist.<sup>42</sup> Sick visiting was another strategy of established evangelism used by women in the Railway Mission to show interest and concern for the men. A Miss Cooper, for example, visited the men of the Reading branch when they were in hospital. She gave each man a motto card, taught them how to knit and make boxes to cheer them up and keep them occupied. Men in the Brighton branch were visited regularly by Elizabeth Gates and her daughters, one of whom sat throughout the night with a Mission member who was dying.<sup>43</sup>

The men responded well to acts of kindness, particularly when women showed personal interest in them. A delegate at the Mission's conference in 1891 told how a 'dear lady,' showing concern for him, had eventually persuaded him to attend Mission meetings<sup>44</sup> whilst, the following year, a man from Cheltenham said that he 'had served the devil well for forty-two years but a lady had at last brought him to Jesus, not by preaching, but by the love in her heart.'<sup>45</sup> Kindness and benevolence was not new but an established aspect of evangelism. Rogers, for example, suggests that the work of Sarah Martin, an early-nineteenth century prison visitor in

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<sup>41</sup> *The Life Story of the Railwaymen's Friend, Miss Emma Saunders of Clifton or The Lady with the Basket*. Compiled by her niece, (Bristol: J Hooper & Sons, 1927), p.12 RM/MISS/1/9/7.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid*, p.14.

<sup>43</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1900, p.35.

<sup>44</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1891, p.112.

<sup>45</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1892, p.126.

Great Yarmouth, arose from kindness and personal interest. She argues that acts of kindness were part of a working-class, ethical culture citing, for example, neighbours in poor areas helping each other out during times of hardship.<sup>46</sup> Railway Mission women involved in these working-class neighbourhoods were able to tap into this aspect of working-class culture through their acts of kindness, especially in times of difficulty. Records suggest that the men's wives and mothers seemed to appreciate the positive influence of Mission leaders. Converted men generally made better husbands and sons, bringing their wage packets home for the housekeeping rather than spending their money on gambling and alcohol

The men reciprocated in their own ways, through deference, in the presentation of gifts to the women, in their regular expressions of concern about their health and particularly in their response to a leader's death. When Elizabeth Gates died, her funeral service was 'very numerously attended' and her coffin carried by railwaymen in uniform<sup>47</sup> whilst a 'large and sorrow-stricken company of railwaymen' attended the funeral of Emma Saunders with different grades of men forming a guard of honour whilst yet more men carried her coffin.<sup>48</sup> The men also subscribed for a plaque to be placed at the entrance to Temple-Meads station in Bristol with an inscription of Emma as 'The Railwaymen's Friend.' (See Fig. 12) The funeral, as an occasion, was an important part of working-class culture with a strong tradition that the dead should be honoured with a decent, well-attended funeral.<sup>49</sup> This working-class practice allowed the men to repay, in ways which were familiar to them, the kindness which the women had shown to them during their lifetimes.

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<sup>46</sup> H Rogers, 'Kindness and Reciprocity: Liberated Prisoners and Christian Charity in early Nineteenth Century England' in *Journal of Social History*, Vol. 47 no.3 (2014), p.721-745 I am indebted to Alison Twells for referring me to this article.

<sup>47</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1911, p.163.

<sup>48</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1927, p.53.

<sup>49</sup> JFC Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain 1875-1901*, (London: Fontana Press, 1990), p.74.



Fig. 12 Emma Saunders Memorial Plaque, Temple-Meads Station, Bristol  
[www.redland.org.uk](http://www.redland.org.uk)

Women's strategies of kindness accommodated difference in class and gender but also coincided with aspects of working-class culture, creating a shared understanding between the men and their Mission leaders. By positioning themselves as friends 'to,' rather than friends 'of' the men, women were able to maintain, yet simultaneously cross, the spatial and cultural divisions of class and gender in their efforts to reach the men of the late-Victorian railway industry.

Maternalism, an established strategy of evangelical practice, was also inherent within an ideological Victorian culture which gave women the role of nurturer with responsibility for the material and spiritual welfare of others. This responsibility extended to all women, including those who were single or widowed. Yeo refers to 'social motherhood' as the ways in which many women 'enlarged and altered' the idea of the married mother 'to fit the single woman.'<sup>50</sup> She notes how 'this new

<sup>50</sup> E Yeo, *The Contest for Social Science. Relations and Representations of Gender and Class* (London: Rivers Oram Press, 1996) p.122.

spacious concept of social motherhood enabled both single and married women to expand their social roles.<sup>51</sup> Women in the Railway Mission adopted this approach in their work, especially with the younger employees of the late-Victorian railway industry.

Ideological notions of family were also found in the hierarchical, paternalistic aspects of railway culture. Railwaymen were provided with regular work, with clothing and housing and with company-provided leisure activities as long as they met company demands for obedience and good behaviour, both inside and outside the workplace. Mission women were keen to promote this notion of the wider railway family and their involvement as metaphorical mothers to the men. Reference was made to Elizabeth Gates's 'motherly sympathy' when she addressed a meeting in the railway centre of Crewe in the summer of 1892.<sup>52</sup> She also exemplified her maternal nature by involving her children in Mission activities and reports from the Brighton branch of the Railway Mission frequently included references to her family. When, for example, her youngest daughter, Ethel, died, members of the Mission joined the family at the funeral and railwaymen led the prayers at a service held afterwards.<sup>53</sup> Mission members also attended the wedding of another daughter, Kathleen, in 1898, giving the couple an engraved silver-plated tea tray.<sup>54</sup> Similarly, Elizabeth Knight, wife of the manager of the London, Brighton and South Coast railway, used maternal sentimentality when she 'touched every heart by telling us of her sick little boy at home' whilst addressing a meeting at New Cross, London in January 1884<sup>55</sup> and when, later that year, she described a text to be read at the evening service which had been 'painted by her little son that morning.'<sup>56</sup>

Dominant cultural perceptions of the role of mother as central to women's identities meant that they were often referred to as the 'mother' of an organisation. Thus Agnes Weston was described as the 'Mother' of the Navy Bluejackets whilst 55-year-old Railway Mission superintendent, Elizabeth Boyce, was referred to as the 'Mother'

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<sup>51</sup> *Ibid*, p.126.

<sup>52</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1892, p.198.

<sup>53</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1892, p.217.

<sup>54</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1898, p.97.

<sup>55</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1884, p.18.

<sup>56</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1884, p.33.

of the Mission in Ely at a meeting held at her home in June 1901.<sup>57</sup> Mission records also provide examples of a maternalistic approach in the work of single women. In Leicester, single, middle-aged sisters, Emma and Fanny Walker, held evening classes for the lads, some of whom were 'rough.' They were concerned that 'many of the men seemed determined to lead the lads astray.'<sup>58</sup> Annie Amys, the slightly younger, single superintendent of the Mission in Tunbridge Wells, also showed understanding when she invited 'six or seven lads' to her home for Gospel talks, events which she aimed at 15 to 16-year-olds 'who did not care to be thought of as children but fancied themselves as young men.'<sup>59</sup> Other single women showed similar consideration. Emily Ellis, the energetic superintendent of the Mission in Norwich, also held separate classes for children and young men whilst Miss Cooper in Reading held classes specifically for engine cleaners, providing coffee and refreshments in the winter. The strategy of providing refreshments which Agnes Weston had found useful in her work with sailors was also successful in the Railway Mission, particularly with the young cleaners at the start of their careers on the railway. The provision of coffee, cake, bread, butter and jam before a Gospel meeting often led to a larger attendance. For ever-hungry, young boys, often in lodgings, it was a welcome reminder of home. A delegate at the Railway Mission conference in 1896 said that, after the supper 'which they really do enjoy, we have a simple little Gospel service and it is perfectly wonderful how still they sit. I believe in giving the Gospel only would spoil it to entertain them.'<sup>60</sup> The provision of food was, of course, an integral part of maternalism, nurturing the body as well as the soul. It also gave the boys the rare opportunity of sharing food with similar-aged and like-minded workmates, occasions particularly welcome in a harsh working environment in which the men were often taunted by their peers.<sup>61</sup>

Women's maternal strategies often encompassed an element of teaching. Many women taught Bible and other religious classes and some undertook more formal teaching as a strategy to reach the younger men in the lower grades of railway employment. Margaret Wedgewood, wife of Goods Superintendent, Robert, for

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<sup>57</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1901, p.169.

<sup>58</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1890, p.114.

<sup>59</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1892, p.123.

<sup>60</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1896, p.111.

<sup>61</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1885, p.177.

example, was involved in the setting up of the 'Young Men's Society of Mutual Endeavour,' at the Goods Department in Hockley, Birmingham. The young men were taught 'under the fostering care of Mrs Wedgewood'<sup>62</sup> who combined the role of teacher with that of a quasi-foster mother, particularly relevant for boys who left their family home to take up railway employment. More structured night school classes, organised by Emma Saunders in conjunction with the Railway Mission in Bristol, were aimed specifically at cleaners to help them pass the railway company examinations for promotion to firemen.<sup>63</sup>

Other forms of maternalistic instruction focused more on morality. In Ipswich, for example, a Miss Ridley held classes for the cleaners of the locomotive department 'warning them of the dangers and temptations before them in life'<sup>64</sup> whilst, in Ely, Elizabeth Boyce held classes at her home where the men wrote out texts 'to impress them upon their hearts' before joining together for Bible reading.<sup>65</sup> Rogers suggests that this sort of interaction between teacher and pupil promoted affection between them and that the pupils in many ways became the women's metaphorical children.<sup>66</sup> In welcoming the men into her home for classes, Elizabeth Boyce combined kindness with maternalism, creating a shared experience of learning and a relationship aimed at encouraging the men to become, and remain, active members of the Mission. Maternalism, spiritual authority and respectability were bound together as women tried to improve men's moral, work and personal lives.

In addition to this type of group work with the men, women also took young men 'under their wings.' A delegate at the conference in 1894, for example, told how she came across a 'young porter fresh from the country who attended no place of worship and was getting into bad company.' She invited him to the Railway Mission but 'had to go and fetch him or he would not come.'<sup>67</sup> Women were keen to promote the success of these strategies. In the Mission's Annual Report for 1900, testimony referred to successful work with the 'young men in the running shed' which led to the

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<sup>62</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1891, p.203.

<sup>63</sup> *The Life Story of the Railwaymen's Friend*, RM/MISS/1/9/7, p.16.

<sup>64</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1894, p.242.

<sup>65</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1895, p.104.

<sup>66</sup> H Rogers, 'Oh What Beautiful Books. Captivated Reading in an early Victorian Prison', *Victorian Studies* Vol 55 No.1 (2012), pp. 57-84.

<sup>67</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1894, p.113.

conversion of 'a young fireman, the ringleader of a drinking, gambling group of eight,' 'a carriage examiner who had been a terrible drunkard' and 'the captain of a football team who was so devoted to the game that he could think of nothing else' and who, after his conversion, told his former teammates that he had 'joined a new club' belonging 'to Jesus Christ.'<sup>68</sup> The following year, reference was made to the conversions of 'a drayman for many years a drunkard,' a cleaner – quite ignorant about the way of salvation,' another cleaner who was a 'big sinner, football and gambling his great snare' and 'a young goods porter who could not give up the theatre.' Particular delight was expressed at the conversion of a group of 'fourteen to eighteen-year-old lads' who 'have been saved from the depths, although so young, several of them were constant visitors to public houses and were both gamblers and swearers.'<sup>69</sup> Whilst these reports give information about conversion success stories, they also provide an interesting glimpse into the demands which conversion made upon the men. They had to denounce habits such as drinking, swearing and gambling but were also required to give up the seemingly more palatable hobbies of football and theatre-going. Women used maternalism and spiritual authority to bring these young railwaymen into the nets of middle-class Victorian religious respectability.

This Part of the chapter has shown how women used strategies of established evangelism in their work for the Railway Mission and how they used prayer individually as a support strategy and also more collaboratively with Mission members in networks of co-workers. It has discussed the ways in which women expressed evangelical belief through their behaviours of benevolence, kindness and maternalism and has suggested that, through these strategies, women were able to embrace some aspects of working-class culture in kindliness, mutual support and in the rituals surrounding death. It has noted how women worked to build relationships with railwaymen through a personal approach and in the shared activities of prayer, teaching, learning and the sharing of food. These strategies of evangelism sustained the women in their work and allowed them to adopt positions of spiritual authority, friendship, influence and guidance which encompassed and supported the class and gender divisions of Victorian cultural ideology.

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<sup>68</sup> Railway Mission Annual Report 1900 pp.4-5 RM/MISS/1/5/1.

<sup>69</sup> Railway Mission Annual Report 1901 pp.6-8 RM/MISS/1/5/1.

## **Part 2: Reaching the Men**

The majority of Railway Mission leaders were middle-class women who lived in different residential areas from railwaymen and, outside of their Mission work, generally only had direct contact with them as railway passengers. This Part of the chapter will discuss the strategies which women used to attract the men's attention and raise their interest in the Mission. It will focus on the use of an agency system and on the ways in which women used the written and spoken word to contact the men.

### **Section 1: The Agency System**

Agency was a well-established tool of evangelism. Missionaries who worked abroad were often helped by indigenous Christians and home-based religious workers also found it helpful to have an intermediary like the 'young Bluejacket' whom Agnes Weston persuaded to act as her 'recruiting sergeant' and who regularly brought a 'dozen or so boys' to her kitchen meetings.<sup>70</sup>

Women in the Railway Mission encouraged converted railwaymen to act as agents. In the Preston Mission, railwaymen were urged to use their own influence 'amongst their mates whilst engaged in their daily occupation as well as in their leisure time'<sup>71</sup> and, in Burton-on-Trent, engine driver's wife, Jane Machin, told the men that they were 'empowered by God' to convert others, adding that 'your highways and hedges are in your daily work along the line.'<sup>72</sup> Surrounded by railway families, Jane was well-placed to understand the occupational divisions of railway culture in which the men were divided by company, depot, occupation and grade. Converted railwaymen could become powerful agents for the Mission within their own 'silo' of occupation, particularly if they held a senior post. Equally, however, the 'gang' culture which pervaded railway occupational groups could make life difficult for converted men who were often in the minority. Harriett Gardiner, superintendent of the Mission in

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<sup>70</sup> Weston, *My Life Among the Blue Jackets*, p.87.

<sup>71</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1885, p.273.

<sup>72</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1884, p.35.

Hastings, recognised this and 'begged the men to stretch out a helping hand to their mates and win them for the Saviour's service.' 'So many lads,' she added, 'drift away on account of the laughter and sneers which are hard to endure.'<sup>73</sup>

This was a real issue for the women and it is easy to appreciate the difficulties which converted railwaymen had. At work, they were bound together in occupational groups within a structure of harsh discipline based on punishment and fines. At home, they tended to live closely together in areas of high railway-family occupancy where leisure activity often centred on the public house. A hint of some of these difficulties was given when it was noted that Inspector Hayden, the man who died from injuries sustained whilst on duty at Norwich, had before his death tried 'with unceasing effort to bring the platform Porters and Guards to the meetings.'<sup>74</sup> Yet, for women in the Mission, converted railwaymen provided one of a very limited number of routes into the male-dominated environment of railway employment to which they had little access and they were keen to highlight their successes. At the 1894 annual conference, one woman said that there had been sixteen new recruits at her branch with 'one of these the direct instrument in leading six of the others to Christ.'<sup>75</sup> Two years later, Eliza Dixon, superintendent of the Mission in Salisbury, announced that a record number of men had been converted that year mainly 'through the testimony of the men at their work.' One of the railwaymen attending the conference with Eliza added that the best message he had 'ever heard through the telephone' was from a signaller telling him of his conversion.<sup>76</sup> His testimony gives an interesting insight into conversion between peers and particularly into the use of modern technology. Another woman spoke of the difficulties in attracting engine cleaners. 'My heart has long gone out to them but how to reach them seemed the difficulty until one of them was promoted to fireman and was converted. He is now such a real help in the engine shed and when I asked him what he thought of a coffee supper for the cleaners, he was delighted.'<sup>77</sup> It is possible that the newly-converted fireman may have been influenced by those in the higher occupational grade to which he had been promoted. Conversion may also have been linked to a concern about

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<sup>73</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1884, p.114.

<sup>74</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1884, p.201.

<sup>75</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1894, p.113.

<sup>76</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1896, p.107.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p.111.

respectability as the man moved up the career ladder and experienced the need to feel a sense of belonging to his new peer group. Such were the strengths of the occupational divisions of Victorian railway employment.

In addition to encouraging their workmates to attend Mission meetings, converted railwaymen helped out in practical ways. They set out chairs for the meetings and tidied them afterwards, they helped with refreshments at meetings and, on occasion, led prayers and Bible readings.<sup>78</sup> Edith Tupholme, the energetic leader of the Mission in Boston, involved railwaymen in the distribution of religious tracts and Mission letters to the engine sheds, depots, yards and signal boxes in their areas.<sup>79</sup>

Women also used railway agency on a more corporate basis, engaging the help of railway company officials. Railway companies, as corporate entities, gave the Mission very little financial support, although directors occasionally called for support from the public when they spoke at public meetings. These appeals usually focused upon the need for reliable, Christian men to ensure railway safety for the public. Samuel Gurney Sheppard, the railway company director and Mission executive, for example, claimed that the Mission could 'make not only sober but Christian men and Christians must be faithful in the discharge of their duties.'<sup>80</sup> In the absence of official company support, women turned to railwaymen with some degree of authority who were sympathetic to the Mission, often using their contacts and standing in local society to build relationships with these men. When Elizabeth Gates took a party of railwaymen from Brighton to a meeting in London, she was greeted by her friend, Elizabeth Knight, whose husband, John, General Manager of the London, Brighton and South Coast Railway, had given permission for a large tent to be erected in the Goods Yard at Three Bridges in which refreshments were served to the men.<sup>81</sup> He also gave permission for early meetings of the Mission to be held in a waiting-room on Brighton station and, when the number of railwaymen became too large for the waiting-room, he provided a bigger room in the company works at Brighton. Other officials allowed meetings to be held on railway premises. The station master at Buxton, Derbyshire, for example, made a station room available for the inaugural

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<sup>78</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1882, p.68.

<sup>79</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1900, p.106.

<sup>80</sup> *Belfast Newsletter*, 28 March 1887.

<sup>81</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1884, p.86.

meeting of the branch there in the summer of 1884 while officials of the London and North Western Railway Company regularly provided a room for meetings at the company's works in Crewe.

Railway company officials helped the women in other ways. John Knight provided cheap tickets when Mrs Grant took a group of railwaymen from her Bible class in Clapham Junction to Dorking for a summer outing in July 1886<sup>82</sup> and Mary Williams, the well-known superintendent of the Mission in Bath, was given a travel pass by the directors of the London and South Western Railway Company to enable her to travel to Templecombe to conduct meetings there.<sup>83</sup> A small number of railwaymen in managerial grades also supported the Mission although they were not directly involved in its work. In Yorkshire, for example, a Mr Townsend, Goods Manager for the London and North Western Railway Company, gave permission for Lavinia Grayson, superintendent of the Mission branch in Bradford, to hold a dinner-hour service in nearby Dewsbury once a fortnight. She was 'greatly indebted' to him 'for his Christian influence,' describing him as a 'great help to the work amongst the men.'<sup>84</sup> Further south, a traffic superintendent on the Great Western Railway provided Clarice Standfield, the young superintendent of the Mission in Exeter, and a group of Mission members with a 'large saloon' for their summer trip to Ilfracombe where they met up with members of the local branch and their superintendent, Eva Moxon. Local railway superintendents also gave special permission for a large number of men to take a day's leave to participate in this joint meeting.<sup>85</sup>

This type of agency was very helpful to the women, both practically and also in the message of approbation it gave to local Railway Mission activity. This was a two-way process. When railway company managers and superintendents signposted their support for the Mission, members soon realised that opportunities for promotion would be enhanced by adherence to the standards of morality and respectability which it promoted. Equally, where railwaymen were members of the Mission, managers could generally be assured of their reliability and willingness to conform to company rules and demands.

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<sup>82</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1886, p.180.

<sup>83</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1889, p.17.

<sup>84</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1891, p.178.

<sup>85</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1901, p.177.

Managerial support was particularly important for women's work with platelayers, generally regarded as men in the lowest grades of railway employment. They had no company uniform or regular place of work, moving along the track as, and where, required and were often compared to the 'rough' navvies who had built the line. Agnes Moore, the middle-aged superintendent of the Mission in Folkestone and her friend, Essie Carter, held regular meetings for platelayers. In October 1887, for example, they travelled from Folkestone to Maidenhead where, with the help of the Permanent Way Inspector, they held a Gospel meeting for about forty men. The Inspector then travelled with them to Twyford and Taplow for further meetings after which the women had dinner 'with our kind inspector and his wife in their cosy little cottage by the side of the line.' Moving on to Reading, they met with 'Inspector B' who 'had a small army on the platform to greet us.' At Bristol, 'over 150 platelayers with their inspectors assembled to give us a hearty welcome,' Agnes and Essie stayed in Bristol for ten days giving Gospel meetings for platelayers throughout the district during the day and holding evening meetings in the Railway Mission room at Temple-Meads station. 'Inspector B' gave the 'greatest assistance,' travelling with them to Yalton where he arranged a meeting for them with the men there and also providing 'his men with free passes to enable them to come up to our Bristol meetings.'<sup>86</sup> The co-operation given by these inspectors was essential to Agnes and Essie. Without it, it would have been impossible to gather these itinerant railwaymen together for Gospel meetings. Again, there was something of a two-way process. It was in the interest of railway company officials to have women willing to give itinerant platelayers Christian messages of religiosity, morality and respectability.

Towards the end of the nineteenth century, railwaymen's wives attracted the attention of the women working in the Mission's growing branch network. Their own spiritual beliefs were, they believed, innate in all women and railwaymen's wives were seen as potential agents for the Mission. House-to-house visiting was extended to call on them when the men were at work in the hope that a converted wife would have a positive influence on a man who showed no interest in the Mission. Mothers' groups were established to offer women, still not eligible for full membership of the

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<sup>86</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1888, p.19.

RMCA, the chance of regular meetings, trips and outings.<sup>87</sup> A group established in Colchester in April 1897 soon had 87 members and, in June, was invited to afternoon tea at the home of Mary Goody, a married, middle-aged supporter of the Mission. They enjoyed a stroll around the gardens before returning to the Mission Hall where strawberries and other refreshments were served. A trip to the country village of Dedeham was provided for the group in the following month, again enjoying a walk and afternoon tea.<sup>88</sup> These trips provided railwaymen's wives with taste of middle-class gentility and a welcome break from the routines of working-class life. It was also important for the Mission. A report from the Cambridge branch neatly summed up the potential of the men's wives. 'A truly converted Railwayman's wife becomes a mighty power for good in Railway Mission work. We believe that much will be done to consolidate the work amongst the men when their wives pray and work with the Mission.'<sup>89</sup>

## **Section 2: Speech and the Written Word**

Women also adapted the use of the written and spoken word in their attempts to reach railwaymen. Reference has already been made to the work of the 'Silent Messenger' in providing religious literature to the men. This section will consider this strategy more fully, discussing, in particular, the Letter and Packet Mission. The success of communication through the written word relied on high levels of literacy which were not always found among working-class men. By the end of the nineteenth century, however, literacy competence had been an important feature of railway culture for some time. The introduction of a printed ticketing system in 1838 and of timetables in 1839 had made it mandatory for the majority of working-class railwayman to be literate and numerate.<sup>90</sup> Of particular importance was the need to understand the detailed company rule books which dictated every aspect of the men's working lives. Railwaymen had to be confident with the written word and women were able to take advantage of this aspect of railway culture in their efforts to reach the men.

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<sup>87</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1899, p.195.

<sup>88</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1897, p.158.

<sup>89</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1893, p.104.

<sup>90</sup> J Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), p.74.

Women wrote to the men on a regular basis, often enclosing a copy of the *Railway Signal*. Bessie Brock, for example, a single, twenty-three year old woman, sent letters on a quarterly basis to the men in her home town of Colchester whilst mother and daughter, Albinia and Edith Melville, sent religious books to the stations in and around Lincoln where they lived.<sup>91</sup> These appear to have been individual initiatives with women working in their own areas. As the size of the railway network grew and stations opened in remote areas, it became more difficult for women to ensure that they were making contact with the men in these outlying areas. Anne Crowther, an elderly widowed woman whose daughter, Annie, was active in the Leamington Spa Railway Mission branch, tried to overcome this problem by sending periodicals, a copy of the *Railway Signal* and an occasional letter to the men employed in the rural areas of Warwickshire<sup>92</sup> whilst Jane Hoste, an early worker with the Platelayers' Mission, regularly sent religious books and tracts to men working on the line,<sup>93</sup> a practice continued by Agnes Moore and Essie Carter as part of their Mission work with platelayers.<sup>94</sup>

It was not only the increasing size of the railway network but also the growth in the numbers of men employed in the late-Victorian railway industry which gave women the problem of how to maintain regular contact with them. The issue was recognised by Mary Cambie (see Fig. 13) in Leeds, a city made wealthy by the Yorkshire woollen industry. The success of the industry depended upon good transport and communication systems, provided initially by an efficient canal system and then by an integrated city rail network which, by the end of the nineteenth century, employed about 4,000 men. Born in Ireland, Mary, a wealthy widow moved to England following the early death of her husband, Edward, in 1866 when he drowned in a boating accident.<sup>95</sup> With her son, Solomon, a clergyman, she seemed to live an itinerant lifestyle, moving around frequently. It is not clear how, early in the 1880s, she became interested in the welfare of the railwaymen in Leeds although she seems to have made frequent visits to the city. A report in the *Leeds Mercury* referred to her as 'Mrs Cambie of London' although the paper also reported that 'she

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<sup>91</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1890, p.89.

<sup>92</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.16.

<sup>93</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1885, p.256.

<sup>94</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1888, p.17.

<sup>95</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1892, p.202.

almost felt that Leeds was her home.<sup>96</sup> She held meetings, organised social teas for the men and part-funded the salary of an evangelist, Miss Ricketts, to work with the men in Leeds. In January 1887, she established the Leeds Letter and Packet Mission specifically to make, and maintain, contact with the men employed in the Leeds railway industry. With the help of a 'number of ladies,' she communicated with a 'large number of the men' in Leeds including 'lonely gatekeepers and signalmen.'<sup>97</sup> This soon became a significant organisation. Within two years, she had arranged for '347 ladies and gentlemen' to send 'a packet of Christian literature each month to 1,262 of the men employed in Leeds.'<sup>98</sup> This was not blanket-coverage: the men opted to receive these communications and Mary was successful in gaining the interest of more than 25% of the men in Leeds. Significantly, in 1890, membership of the Railway Mission peaked at about 6,000 members<sup>99</sup> and, although not all the men who received these communications would have been Mission members, the high level of interest in Mary's initiative represented a remarkable achievement. By this time, Mary was living in Bridlington, a seaside town on the east coast of Yorkshire, where Solomon had a curacy. Bridlington was about 60 miles from Leeds, with well-established railway links which made it easy for Mary to travel between the two towns and elsewhere. This was important because, as discussed later, Mary became the Mission's district worker for Yorkshire.

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<sup>96</sup> *Leeds Mercury*, September 1887 and 1888.

<sup>97</sup> *The Railway Signal*. June 1888, p.108.

<sup>98</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1889, p.255.

<sup>99</sup> *A Short History of the Railway Mission*, RM/MISS/1/9/19.



Fig.13 Mary Cambie, Leeds Letter and Packet Mission  
*Railway Signal*, October 1892

The model of the Leeds Letter and Packet Mission was used in other towns of high railway employment. In 1893, a Mrs Moss-Cockle established a Letter and Packet Mission in London for the men based at Victoria Station. She made appeals in the *Railway Signal* for help in writing to the men in 1893, 1894 and 1898. It is unclear how successful she was although other local arrangements did obtain results. In Liverpool, for example, the young semi-invalid, Frances Ellison, wrote to three men as part of an organised network established in Liverpool before becoming superintendent of the Railway Mission in West Kirby.<sup>100</sup>

Women addressed groups of railwaymen as another way of communicating with large numbers, particularly those men who were not Mission members. Some women used railway terminology as a specific strategy to engage with the men and attract their attention. When Alice Boardman, superintendent of the Mission in Stratford, entertained the men at a garden party at her home, Magnolia House, in 1891, she used railway terminology as a way of expressing empathy with them. She

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<sup>100</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1895, p.161.

told them how she had been 'hard at work day and night with only three hours rest,' how 'she had been called on to do clerk's work' writing 'no less than 152 letters to railwaymen during these last six months,' how, as a 'porter,' she had tried to bear others' burdens' and 'how signal work had fallen to her share sometimes giving the all-right and sometimes the danger signal.' Her 'chief delight,' she said, 'was to be a shunter to shunt men off the down line to the up line for Glory' and to get them 'out of the sidings and set them to work for the Master.'<sup>101</sup>

During the same summer, Mary Skipton from London was the guest speaker at special anniversary meetings held in Lincoln and she similarly appealed 'to the unconverted to shunt from the down line of sin and ruin to the up line to Glory.'<sup>102</sup> The ways in which these women couched a strong evangelical message within railway terminology were well-received by the men. Both women were popular speakers and their speeches were often reported in great detail, meaning that the message was given twice, firstly in the actual speech and then in the reports which followed. Branches were keen to give details of events which they had hosted, especially where they had been able to gain the services of a popular speaker. This type of event was considered a coup for the branch.

Women also used railway terminology in their writing. Mabel Turner Irton, a middle-aged, single woman, who lived with her widowed father and sisters in Hampshire, often emphasised her evangelical message through the targeted use of railway language. In an article entitled, 'The "Up-Home" Signal,' for example, she wrote 'the "Up-Home" signals stand "all-clear"' whilst 'on the "down line" all points stand at danger.' She urged the men to ask themselves 'On which line am I?' and told them 'there are home signals for you if you will only obey them; it may be too late tomorrow.'<sup>103</sup> The link between conversion and the threat of early, sudden death was clear. Mabel pursued this theme in another article entitled 'The Turntable.' The opening line gave a stark message. 'Time is very earnest, dear readers, flying by far quicker than even our "Flying Dutchman" which we know will tear along our iron roads in the dead of night.' The use of the collective terms 'we' and 'our' suggested

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<sup>101</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1891, p.153.

<sup>102</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1891, p.148.

<sup>103</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1883, p.213.

empathy with the men and the threat of danger in the image of the train steaming along in the 'dead of the night' had a hint of Victorian sensationalism. Mabel explained the use of railway analogies in her article. The 'turntable' signified conversion and her reference to the 'Pivot or Main Spring' suggested 'The Work of the Holy Spirit.' She emphasised the dangers to the men. 'Delays in Railway work may be fatal. Neglecting the Gospel call today may prove fatal to you; tomorrow may be too late and then you may wake from your sleep of sin and find yourself in the fire of Hell.'<sup>104</sup> Through a combination of railway terminology and evangelical rhetoric, Mabel neatly linked the men's working and personal lives with her emphasis on the need for redemption.

In her article, 'The Westinghouse Brake,' Mabel linked salvation to a well-known Victorian technological innovation, the Westinghouse Braking system. Named after its inventor, George Westinghouse, the new system greatly improved locomotives' braking ability. It was a highly-publicised innovation cleverly used by Mabel to link the power of the new system with the power of conversion.

'The long, heavy train left the busy terminus, the "Right Away" whistle is given, the "Red Flag" shown!' "Danger Ahead" you cry to your mate, the Signaller shouts Stop. Oh will it be in time? Down with your brake, shut off your steam. Yes, he is just in time, a collision is saved.'  
'You my Railway friends knew it all too well.'

The dramatic rhetoric and punctuation emphasised the danger of the near collision, playing up to the Victorian enthusiasm for sensationalism and highlighting the strength of the new system and its ability to avert disaster. The tone of the article changed when Mabel referred to 'my Railway friends' with an empathetic expression of sympathy and understanding. The tension was relieved when she appealed to the men to 'apply their own brakes' and she positioned herself alongside the men in her final sentence, 'We know not how soon time may be up for us.'<sup>105</sup>

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<sup>104</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1884, p.103.

<sup>105</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1886, p.163.

Edith Mailing, the poor woman referred to by Elizabeth Gates as living in a cellar in London, addressed the issue of railway work and temperance in her poem, 'The Workman's Plea.'

If with one stroke of vengeance  
The Lord should cut you down  
And you should lie *for ever*  
Beneath the awful frown

You *can* find time my brother  
For the ale house and the play  
Things that gild the path to ruin  
Then perish in a day

These two verses addressed the issues of sudden death, temperance and respectability. As noted earlier, theatre-going was considered an unsuitable pastime for Christian railwaymen and Edith made it clear that it was outside the realms of respectable behaviour but there was also a plea and hint of empathy when Edith addressed the reader as 'my brother.' The final verse drove the message home.

Ah Yes He *still* is pleading  
Oh! Where will he die  
Then turn to Him, my brother  
No more His love defy  
You will find a railway workman  
Can love and serve the Lord  
And trust the boundless pleasure  
His service can afford<sup>106</sup>

Through a combination of simple language and a direct address to the men, Edith made conversion both relevant and attainable. Her calls to 'my brother' and to

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<sup>106</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1885, p.77.

'railway workmen' also suggested feelings of empathy and solidarity. She made a direct plea to guards in her second poem, 'A Word for the Railway Guard:'

A word with you, my brother  
Mid the ceaseless din and strife  
And all the rush and hurry  
Of your o'er busy life  
Oh you are swiftly passing  
Down life's too swift incline  
Then oh! take care my brother  
That you go not off the line

Soon, very soon, my brother  
Your train will start no more  
Another guard will take your place  
And your life's work be o'er  
The 'all-right' shall be sounded  
By another voice than thine  
And you shall lie disabled  
Like an engine off the line<sup>107</sup>

Again, the simplicity of the language and the syntax made this poem easily accessible to the working-class reader and Edith used railway language and dramatic rhetoric to portray the hustle and bustle of the guard's working life. The phrase 'my brother' suggested an almost familial connection and an empathetic understanding which she linked to the reminder that the guard's life was finite and the need to convert urgent. Edith was a working-class woman living in a tenement house in London with four other families and, although it is not clear whether she lived in a cellar as Elizabeth Gates suggested, the house was clearly one of high-occupancy. A number of women described in census records as 'mission women' lived nearby. It is likely that Edith would have mixed with these women and it is also possible that she came into contact with railway families in the busy area of working-

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<sup>107</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1885, p.131.

class London where she lived. Her poetry, which was praised and promoted by Elizabeth Gates, combined the core messages of evangelism, temperance, conversion and Christian behaviour. The use of railway terminology and the ways in which she addressed the men directly enhanced the relevance and power of her evangelical edicts.

Part 2 has shown how women used railwaymen as agents of conversion and how they deployed the written word as a strategy to raise the men's interest in the Mission, taking advantage of the high levels of literacy required for railway employment. Women also made use of the terminology of railway culture and took advantage of the advances in communication systems. As the rail network grew, so did its ability to transport mail throughout the country, especially with the introduction of mail-sorting carriages. The large-scale correspondence undertaken by women in the Mission relied on access to the speed of communication systems made possible by Victorian railway development.

### **Part 3: Technological Modernity and Women's Mission Strategies**

This final Part of the chapter will explore some of the ways in which women took advantage of the technological modernity of the late-Victorian transport systems in their work for the Mission. The first section will consider the extent to which improved transport systems created networking opportunities whilst the second section will focus on Special Missions and the ways in which women used travel to create new roles for themselves.

#### **Section 1: Networking**

Comprehensive patterns of networking became established as the widespread railway system of the late-nineteenth century greatly improved opportunities for travel. Growth in the railway system also increased the demand for Railway Mission branches and women soon began to realise that co-operation between branches

would ensure better coverage. This section will, in turn, discuss conferences, local support networks and district organisation.

The Mission held annual conferences, attended by delegates from throughout the country, each May. These were large-scale meetings, generally held over a three-day period, at Exeter Hall in London. Travel to the capital had become increasingly commonplace since 1851 when the Great Exhibition at Crystal Palace had attracted just over six million visitors, many of whom had travelled on excursion trains arranged by railway companies from all areas of the country.<sup>108</sup> Railway Mission conferences gave women the opportunity to share experiences and ideas, particularly at delegate meetings where they gave accounts of the work at their branches. Some women, like Mary Ann Bennett, the middle-aged, doctor's wife and superintendent of the Mission branch in Cheltenham, described difficulties, complaining that 'we don't find it all smooth. As we seek to follow Christ, the devil will be sure to interfere.'<sup>109</sup> Others gained inspiration. Lily Currie, a missionary from Leamington Spa, was 'spiritually refreshed by the testimonies given at the Conference and was going on with God's help,'<sup>110</sup> whilst Mary Jeram, the young superintendent at Havant, said that she would go back 'with far greater zeal than ever.' The branch had no provision for children and Mary said 'the matter has been impressed upon me since I came here and we must see what can be done in that direction.'<sup>111</sup> Women made new acquaintances and re-kindled old friendships at these annual conferences which reminded them that they were not working alone or simply within their own localities but were part of a much wider community with shared experiences and common aims. Regular and reliable train services to London made it possible for women from all over the country to gather together at these conferences.

This feeling of shared community and experience led to branches setting up their own conferences. The first, held in Bristol late in 1889 and attended by delegates from Cheltenham, Bath, Swansea and Dorchester, was addressed by Richard Nixon,

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<sup>108</sup> F.M.L. Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society. A Social History of Victorian Britain*, (Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1980), p.261.

<sup>109</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1891, p.110.

<sup>110</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1892, p.125.

<sup>111</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1896, p.107.

the Railway Mission Secretary. He spoke of 'this new idea' where 'friends representing different branches might meet, become acquainted with each other, report progress and also exchange their ideas as to the best way of carrying on the work.'<sup>112</sup> The nearby branch of Bath held its first conference just six months later in June 1890. Organised by branch superintendent, Mary Williams, who gave a talk on the history of the branch, the conference was attended by six other women who each spoke of the work at their branch.<sup>113</sup> These conferences became popular, growing in size as more women wanted to participate in this opportunity to meet. The branch at Cambridge held its first conference in November 1891 with thirty delegates. By 1894, it had become an annual event held over three days during which 'bright and hearty meetings' were held, attracting Mission executives such as Lord Kinnaird, Albert Head and Richard Nixon.<sup>114</sup> In Bath, ten years after its first conference, the number of delegates had increased more than tenfold to between sixty and seventy, including women who had travelled long distances such as Geraldine Dixon from Eccles in Lancashire and Edith Tupholme from Boston, Lincolnshire.<sup>115</sup> This pattern was mirrored elsewhere, with branches throughout the country organising conferences and the number of delegates increasing. Evangelical women in the early-nineteenth century were supported by others in the small towns and villages in which they lived. The changes of industrialisation meant that the structures of social relationships became more complex in the large towns and cities of the later period and women working in the Railway Mission towards the end of the nineteenth century gained support from these conferences and the feeling that they were part of a network as useful and well-organised as the integrated railway system which made them possible.

Liverpool provides a good example of the ways in which women used a local railway system in their Mission work. Liverpool was the first city to run a passenger train service in 1830 and, despite the death of the local Member of Parliament, William Huskisson, on the inaugural trip, the rail network flourished.<sup>116</sup> Liverpool had a large population of 376,000 in 1851 and numbers continued to grow beyond those of other

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<sup>112</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1889, p.128.

<sup>113</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1890, p.54.

<sup>114</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1894, p.209.

<sup>115</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1890, p.223.

<sup>116</sup> J Simmons, *The Victorian Railway*, (London: Thames & Hudson, 2009), p.146.

cities throughout the nineteenth century.<sup>117</sup> A comprehensive rail system developed in the expanding city and its suburbs and, in 1896, an overhead electric line was opened to serve the large docks. Over 14,000 railwaymen worked in this extensive network but the Railway Mission struggled to establish itself in Liverpool, possibly because of its significant Catholic population.<sup>118</sup> Hannah Heal (see Fig. 14), a middle-aged, experienced evangelical from Dorset, moved to Liverpool with her husband, Thomas, an officer with the Inland Revenue, in the late 1880s. In January 1891, she was appointed as superintendent of the Railway Mission branch in the Wavertree area of Liverpool. Hannah appears to have been a persuasive and determined woman, holding meetings in her home and addressing conferences to attract sufficient support to establish a Ladies Auxiliary. She organised women in the Auxiliary to visit railwaymen in the many stations and depots in the Liverpool area, often using the well-integrated local railway system. She told delegates at the Mission's annual conference in 1892 that twenty-five women were already involved in the Auxiliary, with interest from many more. She also arranged for Railway Mission executive member, Richard Nixon, to speak at several drawing room meetings which she had organised with other women in the city.<sup>119</sup> By the time of her sudden death from typhoid and pneumonia in January 1893 at the age of 51, she had established twelve branches of the Mission in Liverpool and, in her obituary, the *Railway Signal* paid tribute to her strong organisational skills and her determination.<sup>120</sup> The extensive railway network in Liverpool was also important. By the late-nineteenth century, many women were confident in using the train to reach the men in the stations and depots throughout the city and to attend the meetings of the Auxiliary which Hannah organised for the women to meet and plan their work.

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<sup>117</sup> J. Simmons, *The Railway in Town and Country 1830-1914* (Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1986), p.98.

<sup>118</sup> RM Minutes, April 1891, RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>119</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1892, p.128.

<sup>120</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1893, p.25.



Fig. 14 Hannah Heal, Superintendent, Railway Mission, Wavertree, Liverpool  
*Railway Signal*, February 1893

At a national level, the Railway Mission constantly appealed for more workers and, in January 1890, announced the appointment of a number of women as 'District Secretaries' to recruit women to establish Mission branches in their areas. In addition to Mary Cambie who was given responsibility for Yorkshire, Mary Noyes, the middle-aged, single woman who became superintendent of the branch in Ashford, had responsibility for Kent, Sussex and Surrey; Mary Williams, superintendent at Bath had Somerset and Wiltshire; Mary Skipton, the well-known Mission speaker, Oxfordshire; Fanny Walker, the stalwart worker in Leicester, Leicestershire, and Annie Crowther, superintendent at Leamington, took responsibility for Warwickshire where her mother, Anne, wrote regularly to men in the rural areas of the county.<sup>121</sup> These women, travelling around their districts raising interest in, and support for, the Mission, soon saw results. Mary Noyes went to Tunbridge Wells and to East Grinstead where she recruited Mary Arbuthnot, a middle-aged, married woman, to open a branch whilst Fanny Walker arranged visits to Melton Mowbray and Kettering.<sup>122</sup> The technological modernity of the late-Victorian railway system enabled women to travel throughout their areas to build up networks of support. It

<sup>121</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.11.

<sup>122</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1890, p.69.

also empowered them to hold managerial and organisational roles in the Railway Mission in ways which had not previously been possible.

## **Section 2: Special Missions and Travel**

Women used Special Missions to raise the profile of the Railway Mission. These were large-scale events, often advertised in advance and, through which, women could become well-known as proficient speakers. Rose Doswell's success in Special Mission work before her marriage was briefly discussed in Chapter 2. Other women were equally popular. Mary Skipton travelled extensively, holding, for example, an eight-day Special Mission in Nottingham where, in addition to visiting local stations to speak to railwaymen, 'she conducted 18 meetings and spoke at 21.'<sup>123</sup> She ran similar events in Boston where she held eight days of meetings and visited the men at local stations<sup>124</sup> and in Southampton where, over a six-day period, she took Sunday services, held meetings every evening and provided a tea for about 130 railwaymen and their wives.<sup>125</sup>

Mary Easterfield from Doncaster was only 26 when she held an eleven-day Mission in Sheffield. A single woman living with her parents, she moved around the country, conducting, for example, a nine-day Mission in Stamford in October 1890 and, six months later, a week of 'special meetings' in Cheltenham. Late in 1892, she ran a seven-day Special Mission at the large railway centre of Longsight, Manchester, returning there a year later to hold a fourteen-day Mission following which she went to King's Lynn to run a twelve-day Mission where her work led to the 'most blessed time since the Mission was formed.'<sup>126</sup>

Alice Coker, a single woman in her forties, became very well-known as a powerful and influential speaker. Always in demand, she held a twelve-day Mission in Stratford in September 1894, holding meetings in the Railway Mission Hall, attended by about 600 people and in the waiting-room on Stratford station. She also ran evening meetings, an afternoon women's meeting and morning-prayer meetings.

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<sup>123</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1890, p.24.

<sup>124</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1891, p.13.

<sup>125</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1891, p.249.

<sup>126</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1894, p.38.

From Stratford, it was announced that she would be holding Special Missions in Walthamstow, Lincoln and Doncaster.<sup>127</sup> In subsequent years, her Special Mission work included visits to March, Cambridgeshire, Chelmsford and a return to Stratford early in 1897 where her fourteen-day Mission attracted crowds of around 700 people with 1,000 attending her closing meeting.<sup>128</sup> During this time, Alice lived with her sisters in Brighton where she also held meetings with Railway Mission superintendent, Elizabeth Gates. She relinquished her Special Mission work in 1898 when she was appointed superintendent of the Connaught Institute, a Soldier's Home established in Brighton in 1879. Alice remained in Brighton where she died in 1934.

Ease of travel allowed women like Mary Skipton, Mary Easterfield and Alice Coker to become almost 'career' evangelists, travelling around the country holding these high-profile, large-scale meetings. Only Alice Coker was employed by the Mission. Interestingly, she was engaged specifically 'to conduct Special Missions at Branches.' This appears to have been an informal arrangement with the Secretary 'to arrange with her as to emoluments'<sup>129</sup> and with none of the usual contractual obligations which the Railway Mission imposed on other paid workers. No minute was recorded of the termination of her employment although her high status in the Mission was exemplified by its announcement in the *Railway Signal*.

Other women employed by the Railway Mission on a more formal basis were required to travel on a regular basis. Jane Gilder, a single woman in her forties, moved from her home in the Isle of Man to work for the Railway Mission in Nottingham. In September 1895, she was moved to work in Leeds although she was also required to give talks at other Railway Mission branches. In December 1897, for example, she spoke at meetings held in the nearby branch of Selby whilst, early in the following year, she was the guest speaker at anniversary services held by the Mansfield branch. Later in 1898, Jane and Margaret Casswell, also based in Leeds, attended a welcome meeting at the Halifax branch for the new superintendent, Ellen Cheeseman. Following a visit from members of the Mission executive to the north-

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<sup>127</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1894, p.215.

<sup>128</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1897, p.97.

<sup>129</sup> RM Minutes June 1893 RM/MISS/1/2/1

east town of Gateshead where there was a large railway works employing about 5,000 men, the experienced Jane was moved north to try and establish a Railway Mission presence in what was perceived to be a male-dominated, industrial stronghold. Forty-six-year old Jane moved again, lodging in the Whitehall Road area of the town, close to the works. Jane saw Railway Mission work as a career, describing herself in the census for 1901 as a 'Missionary Amongst Railwaymen.' Jane settled in Gateshead continuing to work for the Railway Mission for many years and dying there at the age of 80 in 1935.

Women in the Railway Mission used the technological modernity of the late-Victorian period to reach the men upon whom the successful operation of the technology depended. They adapted their Mission work to take advantage of the comprehensive railway systems of the late-nineteenth century, developing support networks and geographically-based administrative areas in which they took on recruitment and managerial responsibilities. Travel became an inherent part of women's work for the Railway Mission.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed the strategies which women used in their work for the Railway Mission and the extent to which they combined established evangelical practice with organisational and administrative skills to create a well-structured, efficient Mission workforce. It has shown how women adapted long-established strategies of evangelism and combined them with nineteenth-century technological developments to enhance their work and extend their reach beyond the local to the national. It has discussed the extent to which women embraced aspects of railway and working-class cultures to show empathy with the men and the varying ways in which they demonstrated understanding and benevolence in their attempts to attract men to the Mission. Finally, it has shown how women developed as Railway Mission workers, building reputations for excellence and carving out long-standing careers with the Mission.

## **Chapter 4**

### **Women and Mission Culture**

The last two chapters have discussed the lives of the women who worked for the Railway Mission, the types of work which they undertook and the strategies which they used as they tried to evangelise the working-class railway men of the late-Victorian period. This chapter complements the social historical approach adopted in these chapters by exploring aspects of the cultural history of women's involvement in the Railway Mission. It will discuss mission culture, both in general terms and in terms of the culture of the Railway Mission and it will place this discussion in the wider context of working-class and railway cultures. Part 1 will focus on women's motivations for, and experiences of, mission work. While the life histories of women who worked for the Railway Mission cannot generally be recovered, a biography of Caroline Head, a woman involved in mission work in London during the late-nineteenth century provides a valuable case-study which throws light on the impact of an evangelical upbringing and the family environment on women's motivation to undertake religious philanthropic work. Caroline worked for several missions, including the Railway Mission, and this case-study also sheds light on the way some women were involved in a number of sites of mission over the course of their lives and how they might come to undertake work with the working-class railwaymen of the Railway Mission. The following section then briefly discusses evangelical women's life writing as an influence on women's decisions to become involved in evangelical work. Then combining reports from Mission records with census data, it explores the ways in which Mission work could give women a source of belonging and self-identity. The final section of Part 1 considers the distinctive experiences of women who were engaged as paid workers by the Railway Mission.

Part 2 will focus on men's views of the Railway Mission and the women who worked within it. It will firstly consider the experience and perceptions of ordinary working-

class railwaymen at branch level and then move on to consider the views of the upper and middle-class men who worked at senior level within the organisation. I will begin with a case-study which follows the work of Mary Noyes in the railway centre of Ashford to explore the ways in which ordinary railwaymen at branch level viewed women Mission workers. I will also consider the influence of railway, and more general working-class, culture on the ways in which railwaymen may have viewed and experienced the Railway Mission. The discussion will then turn to men in positions of authority, firstly considering the ways in which women were portrayed in the organisation's monthly newspaper, the *Railway Signal*. I will discuss the patriarchal control of the public face of the Mission and how this manifested in men's down-playing of the significance of women's work. I will also consider the extent to which Mission rhetoric was socially constructed and how far it reflected wider cultural ideology. Finally, I will consider the extent to which Mission rhetoric and style changed during the period under review.

## **Part 1: Women's Motivations and Experiences**

### **Section 1: Evangelical Religion and Mission: a case-study of Caroline Head**

Caroline Head's biography was written by her sister, Charlotte, shortly after her death in 1904 at the age of 52. *The Life of Mrs Albert Head*,<sup>1</sup> reflects the style of many similar memoirs written by family members in its sentimentality and its lack of objectivity. It does, however, provide detailed information about Caroline's life and is a valuable primary source, especially as there is such a dearth of biographical information about the women who worked for the Railway Mission.

Caroline, known as Carrie, was the eldest daughter in a family of nine children born into the well-known, wealthy Hanbury family of Quakers. The family was steeped in the tradition of religious philanthropy and activism. Midgley, for example, notes that Mary Hanbury, the sister of Carrie's grandmother, Elizabeth, made financial contributions to the Abolition Society, established in the late-eighteenth century in order to oppose slavery,<sup>2</sup> while Stunt describes Mary and Elizabeth's involvement in

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<sup>1</sup> C Hanbury, *The Life of Mrs Albert Head*, (London: Marshall Brothers, 1905).

<sup>2</sup> C Midgley, *Women Against Slavery. The British Campaigns 1780-1870*, (London: Routledge, 1992), p.18.

prison visiting with the well-known, Quaker activist, Elizabeth Fry.<sup>3</sup> Carrie's family lived in the Stoke Newington area of London where her father, Cornelius, was a chemist and where both his parents, Cornelius and Elizabeth Hanbury, were ministers in the Society of Friends. Carrie's parents, like a number of other Quakers during the mid-Victorian period, were influenced by evangelism and, in the 1860s, began to visit churches and chapels in their neighbourhood.<sup>4</sup> The family left the Society of Friends and were baptised into St James's Church in Holloway.<sup>5</sup> Carrie's mother suffered from depression and Carrie became particularly close to her father and his sister, her Aunt Charlotte, who was active in religious philanthropy in the Stoke Newington area and also in the rural area of Wellington, Somerset where Charlotte and Carrie's grandmother, Elizabeth, lived. The young Carrie often visited them in Somerset, helping her grandmother and aunt in their mission work. At the age of 13, she and her sister, Bessie, were sent to a boarding school in Barnet, where religious teaching formed a significant part of the curriculum and where 'many girls experienced the new birth and each in her turn began to seek the salvation of others.'<sup>6</sup> This school was run by Mary Bayley and her husband, George. Mary, a well-known evangelical temperance worker, ran mothers' meetings for working-class women, giving them religious and domestic lessons. She also wrote pamphlets on temperance and on women's work in the home, notably *Ragged Homes and How to Mend Them*. (1860) In the same year, she and her husband established a Workmen's Temperance Hall in the Notting Hill area of London which aimed to provide working-class men with a convivial meeting place as an alternative to the public house. Non-alcoholic drinks were served and bathing facilities provided. The Bayleys left Notting Hill in 1864 to move to Barnet and the hall closed in 1866.<sup>7</sup> It is likely that Carrie would have been aware of Mary's initiatives and her involvement with the men's Temperance Hall. This may have sparked an interest in Carrie as to the possibility of evangelical work with working-class men as she pondered her religious future. In 1867, immersed in the school's atmosphere of religious fervour, Carrie experienced a spiritual awakening, realising that 'the Lord was *her* Shepherd,

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<sup>3</sup> T Stunt, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/33677> accessed 6 September 2017.

<sup>4</sup> For further information on evangelism and mid-Victorian Quakers, see E Isichei, *Victorian Quakers*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1970).

<sup>5</sup> C Hanbury, *The Life of Mrs Albert Head*, p.16.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p.18.

<sup>7</sup> Mary Bayley, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/50780> acc. 15 May 2017.

Saviour and Friend.’<sup>8</sup> She began Sunday School teaching when she was sixteen and, a year later, wrote that she was ‘just waiting on the Lord with the daily cry “Lord, what will Thou have me to do?”’<sup>9</sup> Descriptions of women’s experience of this type of religious conversion were common in Mission rhetoric and were frequently used by the Mission to endorse their suitability for Railway Mission work.

As the eldest daughter, Carrie often had the responsibility of caring for her mother and her younger siblings and, like many other evangelical women, came to consider domestic duties to be as much a part of her identity as an evangelist as mission work amongst the poor. She took these responsibilities seriously, writing in 1871, for example, ‘I am sure we eldest daughters and sisters have a great deal of influence either for good or evil over every member of our family. Oh! it is a great responsibility to be a Christian eldest daughter.’<sup>10</sup> Her deep religious commitment outweighed the burden of responsibility, finding ‘it such a comfort that we really can serve the Lord as much in the daily routine of home duties as in the more active work amongst the poor.’<sup>11</sup> After the religious environment of school, Carrie continued to be surrounded by like-minded evangelists. She became involved in the work of her Aunt Charlotte’s friend, William Pennefather, at the Mildmay Mission in London. As noted earlier, Pennefather founded the Mildmay Mission in 1860 as an Anglican training centre for religious women workers. After a period of intensive training, women went to work in parish missions, returning regularly to Mildmay to ‘share problems, relax with friends and receive encouragement from all.’<sup>12</sup> As discussed in the previous chapter, Railway Mission superintendent, Edith Tilby went to Mildmay for prayer and support during her early, difficult days at the Mission’s Clapham Junction branch. At Mildmay, as at school, Carrie continued to surround herself with like-minded, religious women. She taught in the Sunday School, held a ‘work class for poor girls’ on Saturday afternoons and, with her sister, Bessie, organised a night school for ‘very poor rough lads in a very poor part of the district.’<sup>13</sup> Work with these young boys provided her first experience of mission work which crossed the social divisions of both class and gender.

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<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p.50.

<sup>12</sup> M Vicinus, *Independent Women: Work and Community for Single Women 1850-1920*, p.59.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

Carrie's parents frequently entertained leading religious figures such as James Hudson Taylor who, in 1865, founded the China Inland Mission (CIM) and whom Aunt Charlotte had also introduced to the family. The CIM was based in Newington Green, close to the Hanbury family home in Stoke Newington. It became known for encouraging applications from women who wished to become missionaries and for considering them to be as capable as men of work in the mission field. Carrie's sister, Bessie, became a missionary for the CIM and Henrietta Soltau, a middle-aged, single woman active in the Railway Mission branch in Hastings, became secretary of the CIM ladies' council, establishing a training and assessment centre for women in London in 1889.<sup>14</sup> Despite the frequent interruptions of domestic responsibilities, Carrie continued to take up new areas of religious philanthropy, starting, for example, a night class for 'sweeper boys' in October 1872 for whom she and Bessie held a tea party in the following December where they gave each boy 'a text, scarf, orange, cake and bread and butter before they left.'<sup>15</sup> This approach was also followed by women in the Railway Mission in their work with young railway cleaners. In her early twenties, in conjunction with the Mildmay Mission, Carrie and Bessie undertook house-to-house visiting, delivering religious tracts and Carrie also ran the Mildmay Flower Mission. Helped by her younger sisters, she arranged large numbers of small posies of flowers to which she attached religious tracts, which she had prepared at home, before distributing them to local hospitals.

Carrie met Albert Head, a wealthy insurance broker, in 1875 and, although she was attracted to him, she did not pursue the relationship until she was sure of his religious commitment. Her need to be connected to religiously-inspired people was paramount: it is important to move away from a twenty-first century view of religion in order to fully appreciate the pervasive, all-embracing nature of nineteenth-century religious culture into which Victorian evangelical women like Carrie were drawn. Albert convinced Carrie of his religiosity and the couple married in February 1876.<sup>16</sup> Despite the birth of her sons, Bertie in November 1876 and Alfred in January 1878, Carrie continued with her mission work. Still involved with the Mildmay Mission, she

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<sup>14</sup> Henrietta Soltau, <http://oxforddnb.com/view/article/47063/> accessed 16 May 2017.

<sup>15</sup> C Hanbury, *The Life of Mrs Albert Head*, p.67.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, p.93.

became a committee member of both the Invalid Asylum at Stoke Newington and London's North Eastern Hospital for children.<sup>17</sup> Bertie had frequent lung illnesses and Carrie spent some months at Brighton during the winter of 1879/80 where she became interested in the work of stalwart Railway Mission superintendent, Elizabeth Gates, with whom she became friendly. On her return to London in February 1880, Carrie started to raise funds to hold meetings for the men on the North London line. The winter had been especially foggy and, mindful of the impact of the bad weather on Bertie's health, Carrie's appeals for funds centred on the railwaymen who 'had to be out for twenty, even thirty hours at a stretch, laying down fog-signals.'<sup>18</sup> To assist with fund-raising, her appeals were linked to the issue of public safety. £50 was needed to fund the meetings and Carrie organised collections locally, raising £49 12s 11d and making good the shortfall personally. The meetings, held at Mildmay, were attended by 674 of the 1,000 men working on the line.<sup>19</sup> Carrie arranged similar meetings over the next three years and, according to Charlotte, was influential in the establishment of the Railway Mission. She held Bible classes for railwaymen, attended conferences on her own and with Albert who became a member of the Mission executive. She spoke at conferences of Mission workers and was invited by Elizabeth Gates to attend high-profile events such as the dedication of the Railway Mission Hall in Brighton in 1894.<sup>20</sup> In the biography, Charlotte described her sister's enduring commitment to her evangelical work. Referring to her work with the Railway Mission, she felt that Carrie's personal contact with the 'scattered, off-time lonely workers accomplished most. She would never lose an opportunity of inviting them to her house or of being present at the workers' meetings and teas where she was the very life and centre of all, giving her sympathy to those who needed it and sharing her own joys wherever possible.'<sup>21</sup>

Carrie died, aged 52, in October 1904. Following a funeral service attended by many friends and relatives, she was buried in Richmond with her son, Bertie, who had died twelve years earlier at the age of 15. Throughout her life, Carrie was surrounded by an active evangelical community which saw the religious welfare of others as their

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<sup>17</sup> *Ibid*, p.106.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid*, p.113.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid*, p.114.

<sup>20</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1894, p.150. The Mission Hall is shown at Figure 2.

<sup>21</sup> C Hanbury, *The Life of Mrs Albert Head*, p.115.

responsibility. Mangion found similar belief and commitment in her study of Catholic women. 'Their own salvation, and that of others, was at the core of their way of life. The means to this salvation most definitely involved prayer but, as active women religious, the means expanded to include labour in the public sphere.'<sup>22</sup> It also applied, as Carrie explained, to family members as well as to the poor. She was influenced by her family, their evangelical networks and, particularly, by her Aunt Charlotte, an independent, well-connected, evangelical woman, who was part of a high-profile network of Victorian religious workers and supporters. Mary Bayley's boarding school where Carrie experienced her religious conversion had been specifically chosen by her family to support and promote the evangelical culture of home. Aunt Charlotte was also an important role model for Carrie's younger sisters, Bessie, who worked for the CIM and Charlotte, who became a missionary in India with the Church of England Zenana Missionary Society. Carrie was a wealthy woman for whom paid employment was out of the question. Rather, she was able to contribute personally to evangelical initiatives and the household income enabled her to employ domestic help. Census returns show, for example, that there were four servants in 1891 and 1901, helping to free Carrie for her evangelical work.

Carrie was comfortable and confident in her evangelical environment. Her life was not care-free; her son, Bertie, died after years of illness, her baby daughter, born in 1883, died at birth<sup>23</sup> and she was constantly called upon to care for her mother. Her deep religious belief seems to have helped her through these difficult times, enabling her to carry on with her evangelical commitments both at home and in the community. She embraced evangelism as a lifestyle and Railway Mission records suggest that other women had similar religious backgrounds with, for example, both Lavinia Grayson in Bradford and Mary Briggs in Wakefield, also experiencing religious conversions. These generally occurred shortly after childhood when adolescent girls were seeking direction for the future. Many, like Carrie, Mary and Lavinia combined deep religious belief with a pragmatism which, acknowledging the social expectations and cultural constraints of Victorian femininity, led them to follow the well-trodden path of evangelical philanthropy.

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<sup>22</sup> Mangion, CM, "'Good Teacher" or "Good Religious?" The Professional Identity of Catholic Women Religious in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales' in *Women's History Review*, Vol.14, No. 2, (2005) p. 226.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid* p.122.

## Section 2: Evangelical Life-Writing as an influence

Memoirs and biographical life-writing were popular nineteenth-century, literary genres, especially in wealthy families. Charlotte Hanbury's biography of her sister, Carrie, has already been discussed and Carrie herself wrote the biography of her Aunt Charlotte.<sup>24</sup> These biographies were, of course, written with the benefit of hindsight and consolidated, as Twells suggests, into a 'coherent, stable life story,' shaped by 'a greater personal confidence'<sup>25</sup> which may have influenced the recollection and interpretation of earlier events. It is likely that evangelical women's life-writing would have influenced other women, especially devout young girls considering their futures. Of particular relevance to Carrie, Mary Briggs and Lavinia Grayson, women born in the mid-nineteenth century, were the accounts of mission work with navvies by Catherine Marsh<sup>26</sup> and Anna Tregelles.<sup>27</sup> These accounts were written almost contemporaneously in a style which gave them immediacy and perhaps greater relevance than autobiographical accounts written in old age. Catherine Marsh, a single woman and daughter of clergyman, William Marsh, described her work with the navvies building Crystal Palace. She visited the men lodging in her home village of Beckenham, held religious classes for them and arranged a soup kitchen to provide sustenance when bad weather prevented the men from working and thus being paid. In the preface to her book, Catherine explained that it was not aimed at the working-classes but at men and women 'placed by the providence of God in another position in life,'<sup>28</sup> urging them to consider evangelical work with working-class men. She used diary records to illustrate the ways in which these men, usually considered to be rough, working-class workmen, responded to her acts of kindness. At a tea which she gave for the men in a schoolroom 'decorated with flowers' and at which she provided each man with 'a buttonhole bouquet of geranium and jasmine,' she described how the men arrived on

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<sup>24</sup> C Head, *Charlotte Hanbury, an autobiography ed. by her niece, Mrs Albert Head*, (London: Marshall Brothers, 1901).

<sup>25</sup> A Twells, The Innate Yearning of Our Souls: Subjectivity, Religiosity and Outward Testimony in Mary Howitt's Autobiography, *Journal of Victorian Culture*, 17:3(1999), p.309.

<sup>26</sup> C Marsh, *English Hearts and English Hands or The Railway and The Trenches*, (London: James Nisbet & Co., 1857).

<sup>27</sup> A Tregelles, *The Ways of The Line. A Monograph on Excavators*, (London: William Oliphant & Co., 1857)

<sup>28</sup> Marsh, *English Hearts and English Hands*, p.vii.

time with faces and hands which 'had been scrubbed until they shone again. They quietly and quickly seated themselves and no gentleman in the United Kingdom could have conducted themselves more admirably.'<sup>29</sup> Catherine was keen to emphasise the positive results of working with these men. She used reported conversations, referred to the men by name and followed their progress, thus making them 'real' and giving a human story to which readers could relate.

Her work attracted the attention of Anna Tregelles, another middle-aged, single woman who lived with her parents in Devon. She described her book, *The Ways of The Line. A Monograph on Excavators*, as a response to Catherine Marsh's 'eloquent appeal on behalf of that peculiar race of men, the Railroad Excavators.'<sup>30</sup> Navvies, she wrote, were seen as an unwelcome intrusion wherever they went and, like Catherine Marsh, she tried to dispel commonly-held assumptions about the rough nature of these men. She described how she began visiting them, giving them religious texts and, as many were illiterate, how she taught them basic numeracy and literacy skills. She caught the men's attention by using 'Bradshaw's Railway Map of England to bring immediate relevance to her teaching.'<sup>31</sup> She arranged for a night school to be held, engaging a school master to help in the teaching and, using maps, prints and lessons printed on calico, she made the room as attractive as possible. She described how the school was well-attended with many men attending straight after a twelve-hour shift at work. She also befriended some of the men's wives, encouraging them to attend the local church and teaching them how to treat minor illnesses. Like Catherine Marsh, Anna wrote in a chatty style, using the first person with reported speech and conversations, often in the local idiom, to bring life to her narrative. Her writing often suggested a maternal approach in which she acted as a kind but controlling mother figure. She described, for example, how many of her 'affectionate little boys' continued to write to her even after they had left the area.<sup>32</sup> Her appeal to middle-class evangelical workers was clear. There were, she wrote, many 'stereotyped prejudices' against the excavator who 'needs help and sympathy,

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<sup>29</sup> *Ibid*, p.10.

<sup>30</sup> Tregelles, *The Ways of the Line*, p.5.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid*, p.66.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid*, p.163.

to be told of the dignity of labour and that, by its instrumentality – his untutored mind will expand beneath the influence of new ideas of self-respect and self-restraint.<sup>33</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, when these books were written, there were high numbers of poor, working-class people living in the towns and cities which had developed with industrialisation. Many working-class families were living in very poor conditions and there was middle-class concern that the revolutions which were taking place on the continent might spread to Britain. Social distance between the middle and working-classes was huge with middle-class perceptions of the working-classes as unruly and in need of control.<sup>34</sup> These books were influential in their promotion of working-class men as inherently decent individuals who needed education and religious conversion rather than harsh punishments. Both authors fired a new enthusiasm amongst middle-class evangelists to consider the ways in which they could work to reform working-class behaviour. Of special relevance to young middle-class women thinking about their future, like Carrie Hanbury, Mary Briggs and Lavinia Grayson, was the possibility that middle-class women could be particularly effective in the religious conversion of working-class men.

### **Section 3: Mission Work as a Source of Identity and Belonging**

This section will discuss the extent to which Mission work offered women, especially those who remained single or were widowed, a sense of identity and belonging in a society focused around women's roles in the family. In the absence of further memoirs or other forms of biographical information, I combine Mission records with census data to give an insight into the reasons why women may have worked for the Railway Mission.

Single women could feel displaced in a society which promoted marriage and motherhood as women's true destiny.<sup>35</sup> Lower middle-class women had a particular problem. Unable to support themselves financially, they often had to rely on family,

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<sup>33</sup> *Ibid*, p.165.

<sup>34</sup> G Best, *Mid-Victorian Britain*, (London: Fontana Press, 1979), p.254.

<sup>35</sup> See, for example, K Gleadle, *British Women in the Nineteenth Century*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001).

living with relatives as they tried to find a role for themselves in a society which offered little opportunity for employment. Mary Noyes found herself in this type of situation. Born in 1859, her mother died shortly after her birth, leaving her father, John, a tailor, with six children. The two older children, Arthur and Kate, worked with John in his tailoring business whilst his single, sister-in-law, Anne, looked after the younger children and acted as housekeeper. At the age of 22, and with history repeating itself, Mary became the housekeeper for her sister, Kate, and her brother-in-law, also Arthur, their children and the employees who lived over the shop in the family's drapery business in Eastbourne.

Mary, however, did not confine herself to a life of domesticity. She became involved with the Railway Mission in Eastbourne, working with Janet and Edith Scott, the superintendent and secretary of the Mission branch. Becoming well-known in Mission circles, she took up the appointment of District Secretary in February 1890 and leadership of the Ashford branch soon afterwards: her work at Ashford will be discussed further in Part 2 of this chapter. Following her move to Ashford in 1891, Mary was recorded as lodging with the widowed Elizabeth Elliott and her son, Frank. Mary became part of the tightly-knit railway community of Ashford and, greeted enthusiastically at meetings, she enjoyed the popularity and prestige which came from the work which gave her independence, self-identity and a feeling of belonging. She was invited to high-profile events, attending, for example, a prestigious meeting of the Railway Mission at the Dome in Brighton in 1891. She took her place on the platform with branch superintendent, Elizabeth Gates, Janet and Edith Scott from Eastbourne, Samuel Gurney Shepherd of the Mission executive and Thomas Cave, the town's former Member of Parliament.<sup>36</sup> During the same year, she spoke at a conference in Margate and, with Elizabeth Gates, Edith Scott and Railway Mission executive, Richard Nixon, arranged a special tea for the men at Lewes to celebrate the second anniversary of the branch.<sup>37</sup> She was clearly well-regarded in the higher echelons of Mission society. Shortly after this high-profile event, she resigned, ostensibly because of her 'approaching marriage.'<sup>38</sup> For some unknown reason, this marriage did not take place and Mary continued with her somewhat nomadic

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<sup>36</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1891, p.15.

<sup>37</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1891, p.250.

<sup>38</sup> RM Minutes October 1891 RM/MISS/1/2/1

lifestyle, working for her living. In 1901, at the age of 43, she was working as a 'Ladies Companion' and lodging with the working-class, 64-year-old, general labourer, Thomas Richardson and his wife in Thurrock Greys, Essex. Two years later, she married the 70-year-old, widowed, retired grocer, James Thurgood in Thurrock Greys. Mary subsequently settled in Essex where she died in 1935. There is no evidence to suggest that Mary had any further involvement with the Railway Mission. She seems to have found fulfilment in middle age through her marriage which also provided her with financial stability and a home of her own. Earlier, it is clear that it was her work with the Railway Mission that had provided her with a sense of self-identity and belonging during her life working as a housekeeper and a lady's companion and lodging with other families.

Railway Mission work also gave the widowed Betsey Pollard a circle of friends and a sense of identity. Unlike Mary Noyes, Betsey was financially independent but she, too, seemed to live an unsettled, nomadic life. Betsey was born in rural Northamptonshire where her father, James, was a farmer. The family subsequently moved to Peterborough where James became a policeman and there, in 1851, the 24-year-old Betsey is recorded as working as a milliner. Ten years later, Betsey had moved to Chipping Ongar in Essex where she worked as a draper's assistant in a family drapery business owned by George Pollard. Betsey and George married just after Christmas 1864 with their only child, Albert, being born in 1870. George died five years after their marriage and Betsey seems to have lived between family and friends for the rest of her life. She became friendly with the Peckovers, a well-known Quaker family who were involved with the Railway Mission in Wisbech where Betsey's widowed sister, Judith, lived and with whom Betsey spent considerable periods of time.

Mission records show that, in May 1885, Betsey attended a tea given for the railwaymen in Wisbech by Priscilla Peckover, an influential worker in the Peace Movement.<sup>39</sup> Three years later, Betsey was referred to as branch President.<sup>40</sup> Subsequent records suggest that she spoke at notable branch meetings such as anniversary events, although she does not appear to have been involved in day-to-

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<sup>39</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1885, p.105.

<sup>40</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1885, p.185.

day activities such as Bible classes or home visiting. This may have been because she seems only to have been in Wisbech intermittently and may not have been able to commit to regular weekly events. Census data shows that she was living with her sister, Judith, in 1901 and Mission records support the suggestion that this had become more of a permanent arrangement some time during the early 1890s. In April 1891, for example, it was reported that she 'was to go away for a while' but with an expectation that she would 'return for the opening of a new room in August or September.'<sup>41</sup> Three years later, at a meeting to celebrate the tenth anniversary of the branch, she spoke of her 'ten years of work' in Wisbech,<sup>42</sup> confirming the longevity of her involvement with the branch, albeit on an occasional basis. Betsey died in Wisbech in 1905, leaving her estate of just under £124 to her sister, Judith.<sup>43</sup> She does not appear to have been involved with any other branch of the Railway Mission but her association with the branch in Wisbech seems to have given her a focus in life which she strengthened with her frequent visits to, and involvement in, the Railway Mission and its activities. The Mission seems to have provided her with a sense of belonging which was missing from her itinerant lifestyle, and seems to have been the only constant in her life after her short-lived marriage. The longevity of her association with the Mission in a life of 'comings and goings' suggests that it was important to her.

#### **Section 4: Railway Mission Work as a Career Choice: The Casswell Sisters**

Railway Mission work could also be a career choice for women and this section will explore the reasons why women may have chosen to work for the Mission. There was a marked social shift in attitudes towards the end of the nineteenth century with paid employment for women becoming more commonly acceptable. Employment for women increasingly became compatible with respectability and women flocked to take advantage of the opportunities available in the commercial world of late-Victorian England. Women worked as shop assistants, as clerks, as teachers, as nurses and in many other occupations deemed suitable for women. Here I will focus on the experiences of the Casswell sisters. The work of Margaret Casswell has

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<sup>41</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1891, p.74.

<sup>42</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1894, p.222.

<sup>43</sup> [www.ancestry.co.uk](http://www.ancestry.co.uk) *National Probate Register*, accessed 15 November 2016.

already been briefly discussed in Chapter 2 but I will now expand the discussion to include the work of her sisters, Ruth, Amy and Elsie.

The sisters were born into a large family living in rural Lincolnshire. Their father, Henry, was a corn merchant and it was clear that the girls needed to earn their own livings. There is no evidence to suggest that the family was overtly religious or that the girls had the type of religious education experienced by Carrie Head, but their work with the Mission does pre-suppose a deep religious commitment. Margaret began working for the Mission at the age of 19, leaving the family home in Lincolnshire to move to the railway centre of Leeds. Two years later, she was transferred to the nearby, woollen-manufacturing town of Bradford as branch superintendent where she was joined by her older sister, Ruth, as her assistant. Both women lodged with Mabel Wray, another Railway Mission worker, and her family in Bradford. When Margaret was moved again to take charge of the newly-formed branch in York in 1901, Ruth took over the role of superintendent in Bradford. In the meantime, their sister, Amy, was appointed as 'a worker'<sup>44</sup> in the large railway town of Swindon where, as in other railway towns, the Railway Mission had struggled to establish a viable branch. Emily Cowie, a 29-year-old Canadian-born woman, was appointed branch superintendent. Emily and Amy were moved to another railway centre, Derby, in 1908,<sup>45</sup> to Hastings in 1914, returning to Swindon in 1915 to join Amy's younger sister, Elsie, a former teacher, who, at the age of 30, had been appointed superintendent of the Mission branch there in 1914. Elsie had previously worked at Mission branches in Leamington and Gloucester.<sup>46</sup> The three women worked together in Swindon until Elsie's death in 1933. Amy and Emily Cowie continued their work there for another four years before retiring together to Bournemouth in 1937.<sup>47</sup> Amy settled in Dorset where she died in 1955, just two years after the death of her lifelong companion, Emily Cowie. Ruth Casswell continued with her Mission career, becoming superintendent of the branch in Birmingham, where she settled with another two of her sisters, Mary and Jessie. She died there in 1948.

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<sup>44</sup> RM Minutes May 1900 RM/MISS/1/2/2.

<sup>45</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1908, p.104

<sup>46</sup> Swindon Railway Mission Commemorative Leaflet 1948 RM MISS/2/8/4.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid

The Mission provided the Casswell sisters with the opportunity to work together in an environment in which they were valued. The sometimes negative impact of the ways in which the Mission used formal rhetoric about its female employees will be discussed later in this chapter. This section suggests that the situation at branch level was much more welcoming and appreciative. When Margaret left Bradford to go to York, for example, she was presented with a gold watch 'as a mark of the Railway people's loving regard.' Women from the Mother's Meeting had already presented her 'with a two-version Bible.'<sup>48</sup> The situation in Swindon was similar. The branch laid a memorial plaque to commemorate Elsie's death in 1933 and, in an article written in 1948 which referred to Amy, Elsie and Emily Cowie as 'a grand trio', it was noted that their memory was 'still revered in every corner of this Railway town.'<sup>49</sup> Margaret was the only sister to marry, moving to India in 1904 with her new husband where it seems likely that she continued with some form of evangelical work. It is interesting that Ruth was 30, Amy, 28 and Elsie, 26 when they began to work for the Mission. Perhaps they had no wish to marry or, alternatively, felt that they had missed the opportunity for marriage and that a career with the Mission was an attractive way forward. Interestingly, Mangion also found that women entering nineteenth-century Anglican sisterhoods were 'typically in their early thirties.'<sup>50</sup> Whatever the situation for the Casswell sisters, their work with the Mission gave them lifelong careers which allowed them to pursue and embrace evangelism. The trajectory of their work with the Mission also suggests career progression. Margaret's work in Leeds, Bradford and York prepared her for overseas missionary work whilst Amy, Ruth and Elsie progressed from introductory work to take charge of the large, railway centres of Derby, Birmingham and Swindon.

This section has examined the experiences of women in different circumstances and at different stages in their lives. It has shown how work with the Mission could give women self-identity and feelings of belonging in a society in which they often struggled to find a role. It has also shown how women could develop vocational careers as paid workers with the Railway Mission and how, despite the terse nature of Mission rhetoric which the next Part of this chapter will discuss further, they were

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<sup>48</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1901, p.235.

<sup>49</sup> Swindon Railway Mission Commemorative Leaflet 1948 RM/MISS/2/8/4.

<sup>50</sup> Mangion, CM, 'Women Religious, Ministry and Female Institution Building,' p. 97.

able to enjoy relationships of warmth, respect and esteem from their work with the men in the Mission.

Part 1 of the chapter has explored the ways in which women's lives could be shaped by families and friends, by education and by literature. It has shown how evangelism could provide women with busy, fulfilling lives in the company of others with a common aim and shared religious commitment. It has also suggested that women used their evangelical beliefs to create a validated lifestyle in a society where many struggled to find viable alternatives.

## **Part 2: The Influence of Culture on Men's Views of the Railway Mission and its Female Workers**

The absence of memoirs, diaries or similar records makes it very difficult to obtain information about railwaymen's views of the Mission's women workers. This Part of the chapter, therefore, uses reports from the *Railway Signal*, the Mission's monthly newspaper, to gain an insight into the ways in which ordinary railwaymen thought about their middle-class female leaders. As noted in the Introduction, the newspaper contained a section entitled 'Lights Along the Line' which comprised of reports submitted by Mission branches, highlighting details of branch activities. These were sometimes written by railwaymen, thus giving an insight into their views. The paper also reported the Mission's annual conferences in some detail, occasionally including verbatim accounts of speeches made by railwaymen delegates. These will also be used in this Part of the chapter to throw some light on the ways in which railwaymen viewed the women who worked in Mission branches. *Railway Signal* reports will also be used to discuss Mission culture and the extent to which this may have influenced the men's decisions about Mission membership.

In the first section, I begin with a case study which follows the work of Mary Noyes in the railway centre of Ashford to explore the ways in which ordinary railwaymen at branch level viewed women workers. This discussion focuses on the views of Christian railwaymen who were already RMCA members. It starts with a brief overview of the development of the town into a self-contained and self-sufficient community. This provides context to the case-study, showing how the town became

a tightly-knit community with a varied programme of leisure and educational activities. This was the society into which Mary Noyes had to make inroads. The section then discusses *Railway Signal* reports which illustrate the ways in which the railwaymen expressed their perceptions of the women who worked in the Mission.

Section 2 combines Railway Mission records with a discussion of the railway, working-class and Railway Mission cultures of the late-nineteenth century to get some feel for the men's views. It firstly discusses the reasons why two particular groups of railwaymen may have chosen to become members of the Railway Mission and then goes on to consider why other railwaymen may have shown no interest in the Mission.

Sections 3 and 4 move the discussion to the views of the Railway Mission's upper and middle-class men. It seems likely that, although no information is given in Mission records, the content of the *Railway Signal* would have been subject to editorial control which reflected the views of the Mission's upper-class, male executive members. The impact of this editorial control upon the paper's content and rhetoric and, particularly the ways in which it belittled women's work, will be explored in Section 3. The final section discusses the ways in which references to women in Mission records changed during the period under review as some women began to gain paid employment as Railway Mission workers.

## **Section 1: Railwaymen's Praise of Women's Mission Work: Mary Noyes and the Ashford branch of the Railway Mission**

The town of Ashford in Kent developed in the mid-nineteenth century because of the South Eastern Railway (SER) company's decision to build its locomotive works there in 1847 and its carriage works there ten years later. The company created a new town to accommodate its workers, building houses, a school, a bathhouse and a Mechanics' Institute. Railway company chairman, James McGregor, was President of the Institute and Quaker, James Cudworth, Locomotive Superintendent, its Treasurer. The company furnished the Institute and provided daily newspapers, including papers such as the *Liverpool Albion* and the *Gateshead Observer*, thus

reflecting the places of origin in the north-west and north-east of England of many of the men who had moved to the area in pursuit of railway employment. Lectures were given in the Institute and classes established to teach reading, writing and arithmetic.<sup>51</sup> The company provided employees and their families with annual excursions, travelling to places such as Dover, Calais and, in 1857, to the newly-built Crystal Palace. By the 1880s, as the Mission was trying to establish itself, Ashford's population had grown to over 10,000 and the town had acquired nine churches, a Temperance Institute, a YMCA club, choral and orchestral societies and three bands.<sup>52</sup> By the 1890s, it also boasted a football team, the 'South Eastern Rangers,' formed by railwaymen, a Yeomanry Guard and a railway employee cricket team. Continuity of family employment was also assured. James Cudworth, the Locomotive Superintendent, regularly visited the town's school and, as the boys reached the age of 14, he selected significant numbers to work for the company. Such towns were not uncommon in Victorian Britain. The Quaker Cadbury and Rowntree families established similar model communities for their workers in their chocolate and confectionery businesses in Birmingham and York respectively whilst the Great Western Railway and the London and North Western Railway Companies created Swindon and Crewe as railway towns.<sup>53</sup> Ashford was clearly an established, well-provided for community: this is likely to have impacted upon Mary as she tried to create interest in the Railway Mission.

Reporting in the *Railway Signal* suggests that there were attempts to start a Railway Mission branch in Ashford in the late 1880s, stating in August 1888, for example, that the 'work was going on but we are still in need of a lady leader.'<sup>54</sup> Gertrude Churchill, a young missionary from Folkestone, had visited the branch in the summer but, after her visit, it closed for several months. The branch continued to struggle to establish itself in Ashford where railwaymen already had access to a range of leisure and religious activities until, in February, 1890, it was 'looking forward' to a Special

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<sup>51</sup> For information on Ashford, see G. Turner, *Ashford. The Coming of the Railway*, (Maidstone: Catherine Swift Publishing, 1984) and *Life at Ashford. The Railway Works in Peace and War*, (Ashford: Betty Turner Publishing, 2007).

<sup>52</sup> G Turner, *Ashford. The Coming of the Railway*, p.151.

<sup>53</sup> See, for example, J Cattell and K Falconer, *Swindon: The Legacy of a Railway Town*, (London: HMSO, 1995) and D Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People* (Aldershot: Scolar Publishing, 1995).

<sup>54</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1888, p.154.

Mission to be run by Miss Noyes 'who is deeply interested in our branch and who, we trust, may be led by God in strengthening the work here.'<sup>55</sup>

As discussed in Part 1 of this chapter, Mary Noyes, a single woman in her early thirties, had been involved with the Mission in Eastbourne where she lived with her sister, Kate and her husband, Arthur, who ran a draper's business in the town. The family lived over the shop with two young children, nine shop workers, a cook and a housemaid. Census records for 1881 described Mary as the family's housekeeper. In 1890, she was appointed the Mission's District Organiser for Dorset and Hampshire as a voluntary worker. The success of her two-week Special Mission in Ashford was noted and, in an article entitled 'Great Meetings at Ashford,' the editorial in the *Railway Signal* described how Mary had conducted evening and midday-meal meetings in the SER works which had attracted between 150 and 350 men and commented on 'her power of winning souls for Christ.'<sup>56</sup> Her success endorsed the need for a branch leader and the delegate from Ashford at the Mission's annual national conference in 1890 expressed his concern. 'Our branch is but small and we badly want a good lady worker. We have fifteen hundred Railway men at Ashford and, if we had a lady to help us, I am sure we should go ahead.'<sup>57</sup> Her work raised the profile of Ashford, described by the Mission, as 'one of the most important Railway centres in the South of England'<sup>58</sup> and, in July 1890, the executive decided to appoint Mary as a paid employee 'to work amongst the Railwaymen there and also to do occasional evangelistic work at other Branches.'<sup>59</sup> After consultation with Anne Scott who had agreed to contribute to Mary's salary and with whom she had worked in Eastbourne, the annual salary was agreed at £80. Mary's work seems subsequently to have been mainly confined to Ashford itself. Mary Noyes was the first female worker to be paid by the Railway Mission and, like the women who worked on a voluntary basis, seems to have been regarded as a 'lady friend.' As Section 4 will discuss, Railway Mission language and rhetoric in relation to women began to change with the introduction of more paid women workers later in the 1890s.

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<sup>55</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1890, p.24.

<sup>56</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1890, p.70.

<sup>57</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1890, p.110.

<sup>58</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1890, p.50.

<sup>59</sup> RM Minutes July 1890 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

News of Mary's appointment was greeted with enthusiasm from branch members. These railwaymen were of the 'universal opinion that Miss Noyes was the very one we required. God has answered our prayers.'<sup>60</sup> A meeting arranged in Ashford to welcome her was attended by local dignitaries, Richard Nixon, the Mission's General Secretary, by missionaries, Jane Loud and Ruth Maddicks from Dover and Gertrude Churchill from Folkestone and by RMCA members from several other branches. One railwayman came from Eastbourne, where Mary had previously worked. He said that 'it cost them no small effort to allow themselves to be severed from one to whom they had become very much attached.'<sup>61</sup> The railwaymen in the Eastbourne branch had given Mary a farewell tea at which regret had been expressed about a special week of prayer when members had prayed for 'God to raise up workers where they were required' and 'whilst they could now thank God for answering their prayers,' they felt that 'God was testing them' and that they may have 'shrunk back from the prayer' if they had known that they would have to give up 'one we hold so dear.'<sup>62</sup> At the welcome tea in Ashford, Richard Nixon compared the occasion to a 'marriage feast.' The railwaymen in Eastbourne had given Miss Noyes away and the men in Ashford had received her. He hoped that 'a happy and united future lay before them.'<sup>63</sup> His somewhat strange comparison to marriage suggested that Mary was passive and subject to the will of the Eastbourne and Ashford RMCA branch members. This was clearly at odds with widespread notions of women's spiritual strength and authority. It does, however, denote ownership and the ways in which the men were proud to have a 'lady' of their own.

Mary's arrival at Ashford was reported enthusiastically in the *Railway Signal*, being presented as 'the beginning of new things at Ashford' with 'old and young alike beginning to give signs of new life.'<sup>64</sup> Four months later, a report in the *Railway Signal* noted that a 'great wave of salvation was passing over the branch through the efforts of our dear leader, Miss Noyes and all who assist her'<sup>65</sup> and, in the summer of 1891, the branch submitted a long report highlighting the revival of the branch.

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<sup>60</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1890, p.215.

<sup>61</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1890, p.231.

<sup>62</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1890, p.228.

<sup>63</sup> *The Railway Signal*, November 1890, p.232.

<sup>64</sup> *The Railway Signal*, December 1890, p.257.

<sup>65</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1891, p.48.

'Praise God we are in for a victory. Praise God we have been strengthened by the addition of some very promising converts.'<sup>66</sup> Two months later, and just a year after she had gone to Ashford, Mary resigned 'due to her approaching marriage.'<sup>67</sup> The impact of her departure was soon felt with a branch report from the railwaymen in Ashford in April 1892 tersely noting that the numbers had declined since the resignation of Miss Noyes.<sup>68</sup>

Although Mary's stay in Ashford was short, reports of her activities and those of other women leaders clearly impressed railwaymen in other branches. At the Mission's annual conference in 1890, for example, the Bermondsey delegate said that the branch needed a 'lady worker. If only we had one like those we have heard of, we should see great things for Christ.'<sup>69</sup> Two years later, the workers at Crewe, another large railway centre, also lamented the lack of a leader. 'There are no lady leaders for Jesus at Crewe and, as there are thousands of Railway people there,' they hoped that 'some lady would soon be led to come among them and begin work for the Lord.'<sup>70</sup> The branch was still 'in great need of a lady worker' a year later.<sup>71</sup>

Railwaymen at other branches were proud to announce the success of finding a female leader. When, for example, Emily Ellis, moved to London with her father, Robert, railwaymen in the Bishopsgate branch were pleased to report that 'Miss Ellis, daughter of our District Goods Manager, came amongst us in September last and the work has gone on gloriously ever since. We kept praying for a leader and now we have one.'<sup>72</sup>

Testimony of this nature suggests that railwaymen thought a female leader was the route to success. While they considered these women to be spiritually superior with the high level of religious belief and evangelical commitment necessary to build a successful Railway Mission branch, there may also have been practical considerations. To Christian railwaymen, combining the onerous demands of railway employment with the responsibility of trying to raise the religious affiliation of their

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<sup>66</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1891, p.139.

<sup>67</sup> RM Minutes October 1891 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>68</sup> *The Railway Signal*, April 1892, p.85.

<sup>69</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1890, p.110.

<sup>70</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1892, p.125.

<sup>71</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1893, p.115.

<sup>72</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1896, p.107.

workmates, the prospect of a female leader willing to take over the burden of running a struggling Mission branch must have been very welcome. The involvement of a 'lady friend' who was influential in the local community could also raise the profile, and enhance the viability, of the local Mission branch in ways not open to working-class railwaymen.

## **Section 2: The Intersections of Mission, Railway and Working-Class Cultures**

The previous section has considered the ways in which railwaymen viewed female leadership at branch level. This section will undertake a more generic discussion of the men's views of the Railway Mission, focusing particularly on the cultural factors which may have influenced their thinking. It is difficult to gain an understanding of railwaymen's views of the Mission without the benefit of first-hand accounts. I will therefore draw on scholarly discussions of other forms of domestic mission and of foreign mission to consider the ways in which Victorian railwaymen may have viewed the Railway Mission and its female workers.

Research on the foreign missionary enterprise has shown that missionaries met with a variety of responses from those whom they hoped to convert to Christianity. Reference has been made to the 'Civilising Mission' to describe the ways in which missionaries tried to impose aspects of Western culture, as well as Christianity, upon the indigenous people. Bowie et al argue that many missionaries 'with a sense of racial and religious superiority' could be authoritarian and patronising.<sup>73</sup> To be successful, they suggest, there needed to be 'some sort of accommodation between indigenous cultures of thought and practice and the new western systems.'<sup>74</sup> As Cox has argued, the 'binary positions' of missionary and recipient are themselves unhelpful and he utilised Mary Louise Pratt's notion of 'contact zones,' as a space of two-way interaction to explore the interaction between the missionary and the missionized.<sup>75</sup> On the domestic front, Ross draws attention to the social distance and cultural difference between middle-class, religious philanthropists and the working-classes whom they hoped to convert in her description of middle-class women's

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<sup>73</sup> F Bowie, D Kirkwood, S Ardener, *Women's Missions: Past and Present*, (Oxford: Bloomsbury Press, 1993), p.2.

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid*, p.15.

<sup>75</sup> J Cox, *The British Missionary Enterprise since 1700*, (London: Routledge, 2007), p.6.

work in working-class London as 'Adventures Among the Poor.'<sup>76</sup> She also notes the ways in which London's poor 'could be assigned some of the qualities of the foreign heathen' by the social investigators of the late-nineteenth century.<sup>77</sup> The cultural gap between middle-class women and working-class railwaymen has already been discussed and Chapter 3, in particular, has explored the strategies which women in the Mission used to create the 'contact zone' described by Cox. This section will discuss the ways in which the intersections of Railway Mission, railway employment and working-class cultures may have impacted upon railwaymen's thoughts about the Mission and the women who worked as local leaders. It will firstly consider groups of railwaymen for whom Railway Mission culture may have coincided with wider railway culture. I will refer to these men as 'aspirational railwaymen' and 'outsiders.' I will then go on to consider a third group, trade union members, to suggest that, for these men, there was little, if any, synergy between Railway Mission and Trade Union membership.

### **Aspirational Railwaymen**

There were clear links between working-class, railway and Railway Mission cultures for this group of men whom I have termed aspirational because of their desire for upward mobility both in the workplace and in the community. I do not seek to undermine the religious beliefs of these men but to suggest that, for them, religious belief went hand-in-glove with respectability. I have noted the ways in which Railway Mission membership implied conformity, reliability and sobriety, behavioural patterns valued by railway company employers. Mission membership was encouraged by railway-company officials mainly because of the personal qualities associated with religiosity. Railwaymen who belonged to the Mission positioned themselves as trustworthy Christian employees, worthy of promotion. While some companies may have hinted at the prospects of promotion arising from religious observance and affiliation, the Taff Vale Railway Company was specific. Rule 26 of the company's Rule Book clearly stated: 'It is urgently requested that every person - - on Sundays and other Holy Days, when he is not required on duty, will attend a place of worship,

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<sup>76</sup> E Ross, *Slum Travelers. Ladies and London Poverty 1860-1920* (London: University of California Press, 2007), p.1.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid*, p.6.

as it will be the means of promotion when vacancies occur.'<sup>78</sup> Other companies followed with a significant number trying to impose obligations upon their employees to attend Sunday worship.

My brief survey of Mission membership patterns during my earlier MA research project suggested that engine drivers formed the highest group of RMCA members.<sup>79</sup> Drivers were part of the 'labour aristocracy' identified by Drummond<sup>80</sup> and, as such, are likely to have considered themselves to have been in the higher echelons of railway employment as well as part of a respectable working class. Signalmen and guards also featured reasonably well in terms of RMCA membership. Although not as well paid as engine drivers, they had regular, long-term employment with reasonable levels of pay. Men in the lower grades of railway employment, such as labourers, were not well-represented in RMCA membership patterns.

For aspirational railwaymen, keen to become, or remain part of, a working-class elite, religious work with the Railway Mission could give them standing in the local community. This was of particular benefit if, as was often the case, the 'lady-friend' Mission worker was known socially to local middle-class railwaymen, working in the area at management levels, often as the men's direct supervisors. The involvement of engine driver, John Machin and his wife, Jane, in the Burton-on-Trent Mission branch has been discussed in Chapter 2. John was born in Ambergate, Derbyshire and census records show that the family lived in another Derbyshire town, Longeaton and then in Brecon, Wales before moving to Burton-on-Trent in the late 1870s. It is likely that these moves were linked to John's promotions from cleaner to fireman and ultimately to engine driver. Engine driver, William Mattrass, and his wife, Elizabeth, were involved in Mission work in Devon. Railway company employment records show that William started work as a cleaner in 1871 at the age of 15. He was promoted to fireman in Exeter in 1876 and then to engine driver in 1880 when the promotion led to the couple moving to nearby Newton Abbot.<sup>81</sup> These were aspirational, religious railwaymen who, with their wives, engaged in Mission work and presented themselves as respectable, Christian working-class couples. Work

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<sup>78</sup> D Clark, cited in paper given to the Ecclesiastical History Society, date unknown.

<sup>79</sup> A Mallery, *Souls on the Line. The Railway Mission 1881-1921* (MA Dissertation, University of York, 2010).

<sup>80</sup> D Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, Chapter 3.

<sup>81</sup> [www.ancestry.co](http://www.ancestry.co). *UK Railway Employment Records, 1833-1956*, accessed 14 November 2016.

with the Railway Mission may well have been influential in these men's progression up the career ladder. In some areas, working-class railwaymen worked closely with the Mission's local female worker. In Colchester, for example, signalman, Harry Thorogood, was involved in the founding of the Mission branch and acted as its local secretary throughout the period under review, working together with Mission branch superintendent, Jenny Chitham. For these working-class, religious railwaymen, involvement with middle-class women through a shared interest in, and commitment to, the Railway Mission endorsed their reputations as respectable, reliable and trustworthy men. It also gave them insights into the middle-class ideologies which underpinned and informed Mission culture. These women and men negotiated the contested spaces noted by Cox and Bowie to form successful working relationships within the missionary enterprise.

Railwaymen's wives could also benefit from involvement with the Railway Mission. As auxiliary members of the RMCA, working-class women like Jane Machin and Elizabeth Mattrass could participate in Mission events alongside the Mission's middle-class female workers. In the same way as their husbands, they could gain esteem from these relationships through which, although they may not have crossed the ideological boundaries of class divisions, they were, nevertheless, engaged in joint ventures of respectable, religious activity. At Newark, for example, railwaymen's wives worked alongside middle-class lady friends to provide a tea for the men on Good Friday in 1890. Census records confirm their identities as Mary Jessop, the 51-year-old wife of railway porter; Samuel, 38-year-old, Sarah Walker, whose husband, Joseph, was a signalman and Mary Lawson, the 37-year-old wife of railway signal fitter, Thomas. Notably, these women were referred to in the *Railway Signal* as 'Sisters Jessop, Walker and Lawson,' clearly highlighting their working-class status. Christian railwaymen often referred to each other as 'brother,' reflecting both the idealised family, and the religious nature, of Railway Mission culture. Railwaymen's wives were thus given the title of 'sister,' a common term for a religious woman and, in this context, also suggesting belonging within the religious, working-class culture of the Railway Mission. The term clearly differentiates them from the two 'lady friends' also involved, referred to as Mrs Jane Blow, the 25-year-old wife of William, a tailor in the town and Mrs Fanny Papworth, 33-years-old and married to dairyman,

Henry.<sup>82</sup> Aspirational religious working-class women could become acquainted with middle-class women in their neighbourhoods through this type of shared Mission activity although the *Railway Signal*, notably, maintained class differential in the fabric of its report. The class and gender-conscious nature of *Signal* reports will be discussed in more detail in Sections 3 and 4.

Even without membership of the RMCA, railwaymen's wives could gain an insight into middle-class social culture. Men in the RMCA were, as discussed, invited to attend Railway Mission social occasions, often with their wives. Note has already been made of excursions to the homes and gardens of middle-class female missionaries such as Margaret and Gulielma Binyon in Worcester and the Boardman family in the Stratford area of London. Railwaymen and their wives shared the experience of dressing for the occasion, enjoying a stroll around the well-stocked and tended gardens and participating in the social activities which usually took place at these events. For aspirational working-class women, this type of outing would have made a welcome change from everyday life. It gave them a glimpse into middle-class homes and lifestyles, an aspirational domesticity, perhaps out of their reach, but something which they could appropriate and use selectively in their own lives and circumstances.

Other social occasions also showcased aspirational domesticity. At the large-scale meals which were a significant part of Railway Mission culture, working-class railwaymen and their wives enjoyed the experience of middle-class dining. The walls of the Mission Hall were covered in wall-hangings and the tables set out to represent the middle-class dining room. In addition to the array of cutlery at the place settings, the table was adorned with flower arrangements which complemented the dinner service: all the usual components of middle-class dining were available to these working-class visitors. *Railway Signal* reports often provided details of the menu, sometimes with a significant emphasis where a 'good meat' meal was provided. The working-class household budget did not always extend to meat and the serving of meat was, therefore, of particular note.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>82</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1890, p.86.

<sup>83</sup> C Chinn, *They Worked all Their Lives. Women and the Urban Poor in England, 1850-1930*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.65. See also BS Rowntree, *Poverty. A Study of Town Life*, (London:

Provost suggests that, in the foreign mission field, Christianity was a 'social force which reshaped indigenous norms of family, education and domesticity.' Indigenous people, however, then 'selectively appropriated mission.'<sup>84</sup> There is certainly evidence that middle-class women in the Railway Mission tried to impose their cultural values on Mission members in, for example, the condemnation of smoking, gambling and theatre-going and, of course, in the promotion of temperance. It cannot be known how far aspirational railwaymen adopted middle-class ideological values of behaviour, especially in the privacy of their homes. Mission membership, however, does suggest that they were, or came to be, receptive to the ideals of middle-class culture and it seems probable that, within the constraints of their economic and social circumstances, they appropriated aspects of middle-class culture to develop their own form of working-class respectability.

## Outsiders

Hastings notes that missionaries involved in foreign mission work found that 'converts were often-drop outs – people who, in one way or another, no longer belonged to a society.'<sup>85</sup> Conversion perhaps offered them an alternative sense of social inclusion. This section will consider why the Railway Mission may have offered railwaymen who, for one reason or another, could feel themselves to be outsiders in the tightly-knit structures of railway employment culture, an alternative form of belonging.

The culture of railway employment has been discussed in some detail in Chapter 1. The main points to note here are the ways in which railwaymen worked in what McKenna refers to as workplace 'silos', segregated in hierarchical structures of occupation, grade and railway company. He also refers to the development of 'railway language' and the frequent use terminology specific, and exclusive, to the railway industry, noting, in particular, the ways in which the word 'foreigner'

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MacMillan & Co., 1901) and F Bell, *At the Works. A Study of a Manufacturing Town*, (London: Virago Press), 1985, first published 1907.

<sup>84</sup> E Provost, 'Assessing Women, Gender and Empire in Britain's Nineteenth Century Protestant Missionary Movement,' *History Compass*, Vol. 7(3), (2009), p.779.

<sup>85</sup> A Hastings, 'Were Women a Special Case?' in *Women and Missions*, p.112.

emphasised the divisions of railway occupational segregation in its meaning of a man from a different railway company.<sup>86</sup> Railwaymen worked together for long periods of time in these 'silos' of occupation and, in areas of high-railway residential occupation such as Crewe, Ashford and Swindon, they lived in close proximity, often sharing leisure activities. Some railwaymen may have felt uncomfortable in the all-embracing nature of the male-dominated, occupational and recreational structures of railway employment. Others like engine driver, William Mattrass, may have been transferred to a new location upon promotion and may have felt displaced in the new railway station or yard. As Kidd notes, 'newly-arrived migrants would be the least likely to have the support of community networks.'<sup>87</sup> This section uses the term 'outsiders' to discuss the ways in which these men may have viewed the Railway Mission and its female leaders.

Some Christian railwaymen may also have considered themselves to have been outsiders in a working-class culture which largely eschewed organised religion. It is likely that non-religious railwaymen saw their Christian colleagues as different and not part of the specific masculine, working-class culture of railway employment. It is also possible that some men, particularly trade unionists, felt that Railway Mission membership was suggestive of collusion with railway company management. Reports of the ways in which Christian railwaymen were taunted by their non-religious workmates suggests that religious railwaymen could be ostracised, both confirming and endorsing their feelings of marginality and as outsiders in the enclosed, working-class communities of railway employment.<sup>88</sup> A *Railway Signal* report, for example, described the experience of a porter who was on his way to a Railway Mission meeting at London Paddington station in 1885. 'Those who cared not for the things of God and counted those foolish who did, sought to dissuade him.'<sup>89</sup> The Railway Mission gave Christian railwaymen the opportunity to worship together in a religious organisation specifically established for them. They could not always experience this level of class cohesion in the local churches and chapels

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<sup>86</sup> F McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, (London: Faber and Faber, 1980), Chapter 8.

<sup>87</sup> A Kidd, *State, Society and the Poor in Nineteenth Century England*, (Basingstoke: MacMillan Press, 1999), p.156.

<sup>88</sup> See, for example, *The Railway Signal*, June 1890, p.114.

<sup>89</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1885, p.177.

which catered for a wider congregation and which were often dominated by systems of middle-class influence and control.

Men new to the railway cultural environment could also feel like outsiders. As noted, this could apply to men who were transferred to a new depot or yard but also to those men who left home to take up railway employment. As the case-study on Ashford has suggested, internal migration was a common feature of railway employment. Many young boys, like William Mattrass who lived in Somerset before beginning his railway career in Exeter at the age of 15, left home in order to begin work on the railway. These boys and young men could also feel like outsiders, working in a new town, in a new and demanding environment and often lodging with a strange family. Women working in the Railway Mission were aware of the insular and sometimes hostile nature of railway employment. Harriett Gardiner, superintendent of the Mission branch in Hastings, for example, urged Christian railwaymen to support their workmates against the taunts of others and, as discussed in Chapter 3, women were especially concerned about railway boys whom they considered to be particularly vulnerable to the mockery of their workmates. For these young railway employees, the opportunity to be welcomed by a lady friend into a warm room which also provided food and the chance to relax after a long shift of hard, physical work may have tempted them to explore the possibilities of Mission membership. Railway Mission culture offered all outsiders an alternative to the harsh culture of railway employment. It gave them the chance to mix with like-minded others in a female-led organisation which offered some escape from the hegemonic masculinity of the railway workplace. Women in the Railway Mission provided Christian railwaymen with a space to share, and freely express, their religious beliefs without the fear of ridicule or torment. They also offered an alternative to the tradition of the public house as the main location of leisure for the working-class man.

In the absence of first-hand accounts of working-class railwaymen's experience of the Mission, this section has combined Mission and census records with wider, cultural debates to suggest some of the ways in which aspirational railwaymen and their wives could benefit from involvement with the Railway Mission. It has also discussed the ways in which the Mission could offer men, who felt outsiders in the

insular, railway culture of Victorian railway employment, some escape and the opportunity to share religious belief with like-minded others.

## Trade Union Members

There was significant growth in trade union membership during the period under review. It is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore railway trade unions in any detail: this section will therefore focus on tensions between the burgeoning trade union movement and the Railway Mission.

The late-nineteenth century was a period of labour unrest and political activism. After the extension of male suffrage in 1867 and 1884, working-class men could exert an influence in the political arena with their votes and, through membership of trade unions, they could protect themselves in the world of industrial employment. Railway company management opposed the trade unions because, as Thompson suggests, they 'interfered with the discipline and obedience of their workers.'<sup>90</sup> The Railway Mission was in competition with the trade unions for the men's loyalty and trade unions were the clear winners numerically. In the twenty years under review, membership of the NUR increased from 6,875 in 1881 to 55,943 in 1901<sup>91</sup> and membership of ASLEF grew from 651 to 10,502 in the same period.<sup>92</sup> As noted, membership of the Railway Mission peaked at about 6,000 in 1890.

The previous section suggested that the Railway Mission offered railwaymen a space to meet away from the managerially-controlled workspaces of Victorian railway employment. Trade unions offered the same and more: they offered a space for the men to meet with additional benefits such as strike and sick pay and, perhaps most importantly, a mechanism through which ordinary railwaymen with little defence against the harsh discipline of railway culture could protest. Trade union membership enabled railwaymen to express dissatisfaction with railway employment conditions

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<sup>90</sup> FML Thompson, *The Rise of Respectable Society. A Social History of Victorian Britain 1830-1900* London: Fontana Press, 1988), p.242.

<sup>91</sup> P Bagwell, *The Railwaymen. The History of the National Union of Railwaymen* (London: George Allen & Unwin 1963) p.698.

<sup>92</sup> JR Raynes, *Engine and Men. The History of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen* (Leeds: Goodall & Suddick, 1921), p.295.

and with railway company management within the protective umbrella of group activism. For many railwaymen, trade union membership may have seemed a better way of protecting and improving their employment conditions than relying on religious allegiance to gain the approbation of their managers.

It is also beyond the scope of this thesis to explore the extent to which Christian railwaymen became trade union members. However, this would perhaps be a productive area for future research. The Railway Mission, however, showed little or no interest in trade unions, appearing to align itself more closely with railway company management. In view of the huge increase in railway trade union membership during the period under review, it would have seemed sensible for the Railway Mission to explore the possibility of attracting trade union members to the Mission. Instead, the Mission seemed determined to ignore this very popular aspect of railway culture. The *Railway Signal* did not discuss trade union activity and when, in 1890, trade union members in the railway centre of Swindon asked the Mission executive for permission to hold meetings in the Railway Mission Hall, they met with a stark refusal.<sup>93</sup> The Mission's position did not change, refusing a similar request made by trade unionists in Hastings in 1907.<sup>94</sup> The Railway Mission executive thus created further distance between Mission culture and wider railway culture. Had the Mission been willing to accede to these requests, it would have gained goodwill from trade union officials and members. Just as importantly, it would have opened up the Railway Mission Hall to men who were not RMCA members and would have demonstrated a willingness to participate, even if only peripherally, in the wider activities of railway culture. This seems to have been an example of Railway Mission work at local level being undermined by a Mission executive always mindful of its upper and middle-class status. Trade union membership seems to have been at odds with Railway Mission culture and distance seems to have been created, and maintained, between these organisations which were simultaneously competing for railwaymen's time and loyalty.

These sections have discussed the ways in which specific groups of railwaymen may have viewed the Railway Mission. They have also explored the ways in which

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<sup>93</sup> RM Minutes November 1890 RM/MISS/1/2/1.

<sup>94</sup> RM Minutes December 1907 RM/MISS/1/2/2.

Mission culture, through its local female leadership, may have encouraged some men to become members of the Mission. The reality, however, was that, despite the Mission's positive rhetoric and the efforts made by its female workers, thousands of railwaymen rejected the Mission. Although the majority of railwaymen seemed to have simply ignored the Mission, there were signs of hostility towards women in the Mission. Jane Gilder, who initially worked for the Mission in Nottingham, found the work difficult when she was transferred to the branch in Leeds, saying that, 'it was very trying to begin with because the young men tried to drown our voices' while Edith Tilby, who went to the Mildmay Institute to ask for help with her prayers for success in her Mission work, complained that 'the cleaners sent us a petition not to come near them.'<sup>95</sup>

The ways in which some foreign missionaries tried to impose western cultural values upon indigenous peoples have been discussed by Cox, Bowie and others. Working-class railwaymen may also have felt that organised religion not only promoted middle-class values but also imposed yet another layer of control upon a working life already dominated by systems of scrutiny and discipline. Moreover, railwaymen were part of a working-class culture which largely eschewed organised religion and which, by the late-nineteenth century, benefitted from the political reforms which offered working-class men enhanced opportunities for the legitimate political activism exemplified by the growth in trade unionism and the development of the Independent Labour Party. The Railway Mission may have seemed marginal in, or indeed irrelevant to, both working-class and railway cultures. In addition, the all-encompassing nature of railway culture offered railwaymen a somewhat insular life which provided benefits and an array of leisure and educational opportunities. The Railway Mission may also have been surplus in lives which were already well-catered for. Perhaps the majority of railwaymen's views are best summed up by McKenna's description of a male missionary's visit to a railway mess room. 'The railway missionary has a capacity to glide into the company of railwaymen, but once he has gone, the stilted conversation becomes relaxed and the taboo subjects are

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<sup>95</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1896, p.106.

reinstated. The free tracts will gather dust on mess-room shelves until cleared by the watchful steward.<sup>96</sup>

Section 2 has considered possible reasons why working-class railwaymen may have chosen either to join or reject the Railway Mission. It has discussed the ways in which middle-class women at branch level could influence the men's behaviour and how, through shared religious belief and commitment, the social distance of ideological class and gender divisions could be reduced. It has also shown how interest in, and allegiance to, the political activism of trade unionism created an alternative to membership of the Railway Mission and how, in reality, only small numbers of railwaymen joined the Mission. The focus of this section has been restricted to the views and experience of working-class men. The next two sections will consider the perceptions of the middle and upper-class men who were influential in the creation and maintenance of a Railway Mission culture which reflected the norms and values of Victorian middle-class religious life and practice. They will focus on the ways in which Mission rhetoric could be manipulated to reflect changing ideological culture whilst maintaining patriarchal assumptions of male supremacy.

### **Section 3: The Diminution of Women's Work**

Little is known about the editorial control of the *Railway Signal*. The journal sometimes included a section entitled 'Editor's Notes' which generally provided details of future events such as a Special Mission. No information about the journal's editorial staff was given. However, the content, style and tenor of the *Railway Signal* suggests that it was managed by an editorial staff which may have included members of the Mission executive but which, if it did not, was mindful of, and subservient to, the control of the male-dominated, upper-class executive committee.

This section will consider the ways in which the socially constructed and gendered language of Mission reports often belittled women's work. Early in 1883, for example, reference was made to the 'little meetings, conducted principally by ladies'<sup>97</sup> whilst in 1889, the branch in West Kirby expressed the hope that 'much blessing would be

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<sup>96</sup> F McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, p.49.

<sup>97</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1883, p.97.

received' from the 'little work being done here' by several ladies who met to pray for the Mission.<sup>98</sup> This idea of women being involved in small, almost domestic meetings and activities, was common, persisting even when, towards the end of the nineteenth century, women were involved in the running of large Mission branches. At a meeting in Horsham to celebrate the opening of a new Mission Hall (see Fig. 3) in 1896, for example, a Mrs Ellis, as 'Honorary Treasurer,' made a 'statement of receipts and expenditure.' Responsibility for these accounts would have involved the collation of money raised by subscription, organising the payment of bills and the overall responsibility of dealing with large amounts of money. Yet, T. A. Denny, the Mission executive who chaired the meeting, in acknowledging the work of Mrs Ellis, referred to her 'little speech' about the income and expenditure.<sup>99</sup> Descriptions of women's 'little meetings' contrasted sharply with those of Mission meetings where men were the main protagonists. At the annual meeting of the West Kirby branch in 1889, for example, the three men who spoke were named as 'Mr J. F. Ellison, Chairman, Dr Macafee and Mr Burge, Chief Inspector on the Mersey Railway.' In contrast, women's work was reported peripherally and anonymously as 'presiding at the tea and afterwards helping in the singing'.<sup>100</sup> Three years later, the report of a conference in Liverpool named the men present and reproduced their speeches in detail. Hannah Heal, although a successful and efficient Railway Mission superintendent, was reported as 'briefly' adding 'just one word to the remarks of the previous speakers' inviting other women to become involved in Mission work.<sup>101</sup> Correlations can be drawn between the rhetoric which belittled women's work and idealised notions of their smaller stature and physical weakness. This was particularly marked in a culture which celebrated masculine power and strength and often linked the technological power of the steam engine with the physical prowess of its driver. Women were considered to be particularly vulnerable in the new dangerous spaces of the Victorian railway environment and Railway Mission rhetoric was as keen to emphasise their physical weakness as it was to stress their spiritual strength. Mission representations of women's smaller size and physical weakness, of course, reflected and endorsed wider cultural perceptions which kept them safely in

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<sup>98</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1889, p.86.

<sup>99</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1896, p.93.

<sup>100</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1890, p.26.

<sup>101</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1893, p.67.

the sanctuary of the home leaving men to occupy the technological, commercial and professional spaces of the public arena.

Gender difference in the reporting of men's and women's contributions was particularly evident when married couples were involved. When, for example, a meeting was held on Good Friday, 1891 in Cheltenham, Dr Bennett, husband of branch superintendent, Mary Ann, was described in the *Railway Signal* as 'our esteemed friend' who 'gave a most interesting and instructive address' whilst Ethel Schmeder, the former superintendent who was instrumental in establishing the branch, was described simply as making 'an earnest request to all to yield themselves to the Lord.'<sup>102</sup> There was no record of Mary Ann Bennett, who was at the meeting, speaking. Similarly, at a meeting held in Hastings in 1890, Albert Head addressed the meeting with 'a solemn message which will not readily be forgotten' whilst Carrie, his wife, gave a 'short but earnest address.'<sup>103</sup> Two years later in Lowestoft, Carrie was reported as giving Bible readings whilst Albert gave 'two soul-stirring addresses.'<sup>104</sup> In both these examples, the husband received greater public prominence in *Railway Signal* reporting although their wives were far more active in Railway Mission work. Charles Bennett, a General Practitioner, was only peripherally involved in Railway Mission activities, sometimes attending the high-profile events organised by Mary Ann although, significantly, the Sunday Bible classes which Mary Ann held for the men were noted as being held at 'Dr Bennett's house.'<sup>105</sup> Similarly, Carrie Head was heavily involved in Railway Mission work, introducing Albert to the Mission and, although he became a member of the executive, there is no evidence to suggest that he was actively involved in day-to-day Mission work. Although this type of gender differentiation in *Railway Signal* reporting may have reflected a more general difference in the ways in which men and women participated in public events, it does serve to give men a greater and more significant profile than that given to women.

The patriarchal nature of wider society was clearly reflected in Railway Mission rhetoric and style and there was a clear contrast between the nature of *Railway*

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<sup>102</sup> *The Railway Signal*, May 1891, p.86.

<sup>103</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1890, p.132.

<sup>104</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1892, p.216.

<sup>105</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1894, p.106.

*Signal* reports and the feelings which railwaymen in Mission branches expressed about their local female leaders. Mission women's influence at local branch level reflects the findings of both Gleadle and Richardson. They note the local community as the main site of women's activism in the early-nineteenth century and Gleadle points to the ways in which middle-class women created authoritative identities from their standing in the local community. In national initiatives, however, she suggests that women were restricted by the patriarchal ideologies which supported the male-domination of the wider public sphere.<sup>106</sup> Women in the Railway Mission were well-known in their local communities, often because of their social standing and their involvement in local, religious philanthropic work. Indeed, local railwaymen approached the middle-class, religious, philanthropic worker, Elizabeth Gates, in Brighton and the shop-keeper and religious activist, Caroline Ridley, in Bury St Edmunds for help in establishing local branches of the Mission. Women appear to have been valued at local level with an almost 'domestic' feel to their branch work but, at a national level and in the *Railway Signal*, a newspaper which was the main interface between the Railway Mission and the public, there was a concern to maintain patriarchal notions of male dominance and supremacy.

#### **Section 4: Contrasting Attitudes towards Voluntary and Paid Women Mission Workers**

This section will discuss the ways in which reports about women leaders changed during the period under review. The Railway Mission relied heavily on women's voluntary labour, especially during its early years and was keen to portray women as highly-regarded 'lady friends.' The 'Lights Along the Line' section of the *Railway Signal* promoted these notions and, although this section often reflected the views of railwaymen at branch level, the widespread inclusion of these reports in the *Railway Signal*, suggests that there was editorial support for these expressions of warmth towards women working on a voluntary basis at local level.

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<sup>106</sup> See K Gleadle, *Borderline Citizens. Women, Gender and Political Culture in Victorian Britain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009) and S. Richardson, *The Political Worlds of Women. Gender and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013).

In the report of a meeting held to celebrate the second anniversary of the branch in Leamington, branch members 'praised God for our esteemed leaders Miss and Mrs Crowther'<sup>107</sup> whilst railwaymen in the Melton Mowbray Mission branch similarly 'praised the Lord for sending our esteemed leader Mrs Crosher to take up the work.'<sup>108</sup> The *Signal* also contained many reports of railwaymen in branches presenting gifts to their 'lady friends' in recognition of their regard. The second anniversary of Alice Boardman becoming superintendent of the branch in Stratford, for example, was celebrated as a 'red-letter day' by branch members who 'showed their love and esteem by presenting her with a writing desk suitably inscribed.'<sup>109</sup> The railwaymen in Mission branches were also keen to claim ownership of their lady leader. Mary Briggs in Wakefield was described as 'our beloved leader' whilst railwaymen in Dover considered Jane Loud to be a 'kind friend of ours.'<sup>110</sup> A report from the men in Eccles endorsed both these sentiments of ownership and esteem when they celebrated Eliza Dixon's return from holiday with a 'welcome-home tea party and a service of song,' noting that 'with our leader at the helm again, we shall sail through tempest and calm.'<sup>111</sup> Railwaymen in the Bradford branch held a similar event to welcome Lavinia Grayson back after two months of rest following an illness in 1892. These reports, which confirmed the warmth of the relationship between railwaymen and their female leaders, also gave suggestions of deference and an acknowledgement of the class differential between middle-class women leaders and working-class railwaymen. Railwaymen were proud to have their own 'lady friend' and were keen to repay her interest in them with gifts and celebratory events.

Changes began to creep in towards the end of the period under review. Although the Mission still relied heavily on women's voluntary labour, it began to employ a small number of women. Details of these women are given in Appendix 9. Appointments made by the Railway Mission executive were noted by the Mission Secretary in the Mission's Minute Book. They provided only the woman's name, salary, the terms of employment and the branch to which she was assigned. Information in the *Railway Signal* also became similarly terse and factual. Instead of the detailed expressions of

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<sup>107</sup> *The Railway Signal*, January 1890, p.16.

<sup>108</sup> *The Railway Signal*, March 1890, p.73.

<sup>109</sup> *The Railway Signal*, February 1890, p.24.

<sup>110</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1888, p.186.

<sup>111</sup> *The Railway Signal*, August 1892, p.177.

welcome, warmth and celebration which were given to voluntary women workers, reports in 1895 merely noted that 'Miss Clarice Standfield has been appointed a worker at King's Cross'<sup>112</sup> and Miss Gilder 'who worked for some time among the Railwaymen in Nottingham, has been appointed a worker at Leeds Railway Mission.'<sup>113</sup> These notices were stark in comparison to the contemporaneous report in the *Railway Signal's* 'Lights Along the Line' section of a 'welcome-home' meeting held by local railwaymen for Fanny Burton, superintendent of the Mission branch in Selby, and her sister, Annie, who had been 'absent for a few weeks in the South of England' at which Annie was presented with a Bible and Fanny, an album.<sup>114</sup> Formal reports in the *Railway Signal* of the recruitment of female workers continued in the same factual manner. In August 1897, a report noted that 'Miss Margaret Casswell had been appointed a worker at Leeds'<sup>115</sup> and, a year later, similarly advised that 'Miss Cheeseman has been appointed as the worker at Halifax.'<sup>116</sup> Even after the women had become known in Mission circles, Mission executive rhetoric remained stark. When, for example, Margaret Casswell took over the Bradford branch following the resignation of Lavinia Grayson, the *Signal* merely noted that 'Miss M Casswell was now in charge of the Bradford branch.'<sup>117</sup>

The change from the respectful term of 'lady friend' with its middle and upper-class connotations to the use of the term 'worker' with its working-class connotations was much more than a question of semantics. It signified the wide division between the ways in which the Railway Mission viewed its volunteer and its paid female workers. Women who were paid by the Mission were not ladies, simply women. As Sutherland notes, the terms lady and women 'carried powerful and complex meanings, saying much about the standing of those they described in the social structure. Women were expected to work, had to do so: ladies did not have to work, indeed, in general, were not expected to do so, and were expected to look and behave very differently from women.'<sup>118</sup> Ross makes a similar point, suggesting that: 'many subtle and

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<sup>112</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1895, p.110.

<sup>113</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1895, p.190.

<sup>114</sup> *The Railway Signal*, July 1895, p.136.

<sup>115</sup> *The Railway Signal*, September 1897, p.170,

<sup>116</sup> *The Railway Signal*, October 1898, p.192,

<sup>117</sup> *The Railway Signal*, June 1899, p.106,

<sup>118</sup> G Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman. Middle-Class Women and Work in Britain 1870-1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015) p.14.

unspoken elements intermixed in a figure who would be perceived by peers as a lady: accent, voice, education, choice of vocabulary, hairstyle and habits of dress – such as the wearing of gloves of the right colour and length.’<sup>119</sup> Class differential meant that women as paid workers could not be considered as ‘lady friends.’

Practical differences also arose. Women who worked for the Railway Mission on a voluntary basis arranged their work around their personal and social commitments and, keen to retain its voluntary workers, the Mission accommodated long periods of absence for holidays. Paid workers, however, were deployed to meet the Mission’s needs, moving from branch to branch when required and often having to move into lodgings.

This Part of the chapter has shown how the Mission used socially-constructed, patriarchal language to diminish women’s work, often relegating it to the level of the domestic whilst celebrating the contribution of men, particularly at high-profile events. It has also shown how descriptions of women workers changed significantly as they became paid employees who did not merit the deferential, class-conscious rhetoric applied to middle-class voluntary workers.

## **Conclusion**

This chapter has explored the cultural influences which could motivate women to become involved in religious philanthropy and has highlighted family background, education and evangelical life-writing as being particularly important. It has suggested that, although women in the Railway Mission were undoubtedly driven by strong religious commitment, there may also have been an element of pragmatism in which they recognised the lack of other opportunities available to them. It has examined the ways in which women could gain self-identity and feelings of belonging from their Railway Mission work and how, in line with contemporaneous cultural and economic changes, women began to take up paid work with the Mission. It has suggested that railwaymen at branch level thought highly of their female leaders and how relationships of reciprocation developed between these railwaymen and the

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<sup>119</sup> E Ross, *Slum Travelers*, p.296.

middle-class women working in Railway Mission branches. The chapter has discussed the influence of culture in its consideration of the reasons why some working-class railwaymen embraced Mission membership while the large majority seems to have ignored it. The chapter has also highlighted the ways in which socially constructed, patriarchal language in *Railway Signal* reports could diminish women's work and revealed how the Railway Mission, through the medium of the newspaper, developed a reporting style which upheld notions of male supremacy, especially in its interactions with the public. It has explored the ways in which Railway Mission rhetoric changed with the introduction of paid women workers, highlighting the differences in rhetoric and style which arose between the formality of *Railway Signal* reports influenced by the upper-class male executive and those made by railwaymen at branch level. Finally, it has shown that, despite the curt nature of formal *Railway Signal* reports about the Mission's paid female workers, the women themselves went on to develop careers in which they retained the high regard of, and a warm relationship with, the men whom they worked to convert.

## Conclusion

This thesis has aimed to uncover the lives and experiences of the women who undertook evangelical work for the Railway Mission in the late-Victorian period. In particular, I wanted to explore the ways in which they built pathways into the male-dominated environment of the Victorian railway industry and how they crossed the barriers of class and gender in order to evangelise the large body of working-class men employed in the late-nineteenth century railway stations, workshops and goods yards.

In researching this topic, I have adopted a new approach to the study of the lives of evangelical women by combining the use of traditional, contemporaneous written sources with newly available, digitalised resources of census and related genealogical data. Combining these records provides a means of looking beyond the representations of women's activities in Railway Mission reports to glimpse into the women missionaries' personal lives. As Liddington suggests in her own research into the suffragette movement, which also makes use of digitised census records, this has 'illuminated lives' in ways which have not, hitherto, been possible.<sup>690</sup> Access to these digitalised sources of information, which provide the details of women's personal lives, has been instrumental in the qualitative focus of this research. Yet, at the same time, the relative ease of access to digitalised census records covering a wide geographical area and extended chronological time period has also enabled me to produce a detailed overview of a significant number of the women who worked for the Railway Mission in the late-nineteenth century. This research has, therefore, operated at two levels. The overview has provided detailed, quantitative information about a large sample of women who worked for the Mission in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, building up a picture of the types of women who undertook Railway Mission work and giving an insight into their backgrounds and personal

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<sup>690</sup> J Liddington, *Vanishing for the Vote. Suffrage, Citizenship and the Battle for the Census*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2014), p.20.

circumstances. The more in-depth studies of individual women have, for the first time, brought the women to life and given them a voice. This research has, thus, at both levels, uncovered the lives of a large number of women who have, to date, been hidden from history.

This research has also provided a new perspective on the study of women's evangelical work because of its focus on their involvement with working-class men. Previous scholarship has concentrated on women's work with poorer women and with indigenous women overseas. This shift of focus has challenged earlier scholarship stressing the highly polarized nature of Victorian class and gender relationships through its illustrations of the ways in which middle-class women worked collaboratively with working-class men to raise interest in, and gain support for, the Railway Mission. Collaboration with Christian, working-class railwaymen reflected the women's determination to use all avenues in their bid to evangelise the men and this thesis has illustrated the commitment of large numbers of women to their work with the Railway Mission and, particularly, the unique ways in which they embraced and utilised railway culture. These middle-class women could not work from assumptions of a shared gender identity as they did when engaging in mission work with working-class women. Instead, as this research has shown, women sought to cross class as well as gender boundaries through engaging with, and making efforts to gain an understanding of, railway culture; for example, they made use of railway terminology and showed willingness to accommodate railway working shift patterns in their arrangements for Mission meetings and classes.

There is also evidence to suggest that the women developed relationships of friendship with the railwaymen through their interest in, and kindness towards, them. These relationships were reciprocal. This two-way process was illustrated by the ways in which the men responded to the women through expressions of appreciation, the giving of gifts and, particularly, through their efforts to adhere to middle-class notions of respectability in their behaviour and dress at Railway Mission events. Through their demonstrations of concern for the men, women drew the men into the Mission by providing an alternative to the men's working environment which operated around a strict regime of harsh working conditions, punishments and fines. While Mission records provide examples of the ways in which women sometimes

tried to impose middle-class norms of respectable behaviour upon RMCA members, there is also significant evidence to suggest that social distance was reduced through the development of cross-gender and class relationships in which middle-class women and working-class men worked together to create reciprocal arrangements of kindness and respect. These examples of cross-class and gender co-operation do not call into question the power of ideologies about the centrality of women's role in the home but they do suggest that women's lives displayed greater permeability between 'private' and 'public' spheres than a rigid 'separate spheres' interpretive framework allows.

This research has shown that, although the majority of women who worked for the Railway Mission were single, middle-class women, there were significant variations in their lifestyles. There were, for example, differences in age, familial background and household arrangements. Indeed, this research challenges stereotypical ideas about the overwhelming dominance in the Victorian period of the nuclear family with a male head of household and dependent wife and children by showing how women who worked for the Railway Mission lived and worked in a variety of household units, often without male patronage or support. It has also illustrated the differences between the ways in which women approached their Mission work. Some maintained a discreet distance between the railwaymen whom they hoped to convert by working anonymously as a benefactor or 'Silent Messenger' whilst others were highly visible and vocal in their work. This raises interesting questions about the Mission's idealised female worker, the fictional 'Miss Go-Ahead' who was required to be quiet, charming and womanly in her manner and approach, thus displaying the attributes of idealised, Victorian femininity. This study confirms the arguments of Vickery, Gordon and Nair, Gleadle and Richardson which highlight the significant differences between the prescriptions about how women should live and the realities of women's lives. Public Mission rhetoric, reflecting the continuing strength of wider cultural ideologies about women's proper place and their passive and submissive nature, promoted, as this thesis has shown, prescriptive ideals which frequently acted to deny full public recognition to women's work for the Mission. However, the Railway Mission would not have enjoyed the success of its early years had women not been prepared to move beyond these prescriptive ideals and to create new space for themselves, both physically and metaphorically, as they developed their work for the Mission. Women

in the Railway Mission combined their religious work with domestic and social responsibilities. They ran homes, some cared for children and many managed servants. A significant number wrote articles for the Mission or undertook correspondence with railwaymen: many organised and held Bible classes, educational classes, women's groups and Sunday School meetings whilst yet more ran successful Railway Mission branches. Women formed support networks, attended conferences, ran Special Missions, held fund-raising activities and organised outings and social events for the men. In their study of women's lives in Victorian Glasgow, Gordon and Nair found them to have 'multiple, competing identities'<sup>691</sup> and this research has also illustrated the ways in which women adopted different personas as they moved between the privacy of the home and the public spaces of the outside world. In particular, it has shown how women moved between the feminised sanctity of the home, the masculine sanctum of the railwaymen's mess room, the semi-public space of the Bible class in the station waiting room and the highly-visible seat on the platform at large public meetings.

This research has thus shown that prescriptive Mission rhetoric did not reflect much of the actual work on the ground which women undertook. Women used a variety of strategies in their Railway Mission work, ranging from established practices of evangelism in which their spirituality embraced and endorsed ideological notions of mid-Victorian femininity, to behaviours more in line with the 'New Woman' of the late-Victorian period. The 'New Woman,' described as a 'central figure in late-Victorian culture and a notable force for social and political change,'<sup>692</sup> eschewed marriage, lived and worked independently, sought opportunities outside of the home and moved about freely in the towns and cities of late-Victorian Britain. Many women in the Mission travelled extensively in their work, throughout their locality and beyond. They attended conferences, spoke to large gatherings at Special Missions, addressed public meetings, organized branch activities and developed the business skills of administration and financial management. Indeed, they generally worked more independently in the running of a Mission branch than many of those women

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<sup>691</sup> Gordon and Nair, *Public Lives. Women, Family and Society in Victorian Britain* (London: Yale University Press, 2003), p.232.

<sup>692</sup> A Richardson and C Willis, *The New Woman in Fiction and in Fact. Fin-de-Siecle Feminisms*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Publishing, 2001), p.28. For further discussion on the 'New Woman', see also G Sutherland, *In Search of the New Woman. Middle-class Women and Work in Britain 1870-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

who were gaining new employment opportunities in the commercial world of the late-nineteenth century. The mantle of religion gave them respectability as they mixed and worked with the working-class men of the male-dominated railway industry. They were not the submissive, quiet women idealised by the Mission in its rhetoric and personified in its description of the fictional 'Miss Go-Ahead.' Whilst her name may have signified modernity, the description of her demeanour and behaviour located her firmly in mid-nineteenth century ideologies of prescriptive feminine attitudes and manner. The modernity of the late-nineteenth century was, as this thesis has illustrated, more closely reflected in the lives and work of the Mission's 'New Women' than in its prescriptive portrayal of the idealised 'Miss Go-Ahead.'

This research has also exposed the gap between Victorian ideological notions of the home as a special, private space shielded from the vagaries of the outside world and the reality of the ways in which Mission women linked home with evangelism in the wider world. The drawing room of the Mission supporter, for example, ideologically portrayed as the appropriate feminine space for polite entertainment, became the focus of evangelism in which meetings were held to raise interest in, and financial support for, the Mission. Women working for the Railway Mission also frequently opened up their homes to working-class railwaymen for religious instruction and Bible classes and to provide entertainment for railwaymen and their families. Whilst there may have been some acknowledgement of class differential in the formality of many of these occasions, the ideological barriers of both class and gender were breached when middle-class women invited working-class men into their homes for informal suppers and to celebrate special occasions such as New Year. Women in the Railway Mission do not seem to have concerned themselves too closely with prescriptive ideologies but saw this type of initiative as an integral part of their work, illustrating both the permeability of physical space and the flexibility of women's lives. I have suggested that perceptions about the strength of women's spirituality which ideologically anchored them firmly in the home, simultaneously gave them influence and authority over the men whom they worked to evangelise. I have also discussed the ways in which women used their strong spiritual beliefs to work outside of the home in, for example, Mission Halls, railway station waiting rooms, mess rooms and workshops. These competing locations for women's spirituality are not contradictory but rather illustrate the permeability and complexity of women's lives and the ways in

which they accommodated, and adapted to, the needs of the Railway Mission. Whilst the core of the women's identity may have been centred in the home, their work with the Mission illustrates the ways in which they were able to adopt other roles and identities as they moved in and out of the permeable spaces of the home, the Mission Hall and the railway buildings of late-Victorian Britain.

Although this thesis has offered many new insights into the neglected histories of the women involved with the Railway Mission in the late-nineteenth century, there have, inevitably, been some limitations and omissions. It is important to note, for example, that Mission records focused on success rather than failures and we have no information about the women who worked for the Mission for only a short period of time or the reasons why they left Mission work. Nor do we have any record of those women who declined the opportunity to become involved with the Railway Mission. As the thesis has discussed, the Mission made constant appeals for female workers and reference was frequently made in branch reports to women who were considering whether they should take up the work. These women were referred to anonymously with no further record about subsequent decisions to reject a role with the Mission. It seems that these women may remain hidden from history.

We are also lacking the views of the thousands of railwaymen who declined the opportunity to become members of the Mission. As discussed in Chapter 1, even at its peak, Mission membership was low when compared with the huge numbers of men employed in the late-Victorian railway industry and, whilst I have discussed possible reasons for these low numbers and the ways in which some railwaymen may have viewed the Railway Mission, there is no record of the vast majority of railwaymen's views about the Mission and its female leaders. It is difficult to know how this may be addressed although it is possible that Trade Union or railway employment records may through provide some general information about the men. In addition, as discussed in Chapter 4, although Mission records provide some evidence of members' views of the Mission, particularly in relation to their 'lady friends,' it is important to note that this evidence was managed by the *Railway Signal's* editorial board. Men at senior level chose what to report and what to omit and, as these men were keen to promote the success of the Mission and its conversion rates, it seems likely that there may have been at least an element of

subjectivity in the content of the paper's reports. Male control of the *Signal's* content and style also applied to the small number of articles about the Mission's female workers. Editorial selection criteria determined when these articles were published and the ways in which the women were portrayed as the idealised, feminine religious worker of the mid-Victorian period. Whilst my use of census and related information has gone some way to position the women in terms of age, background and marital status, thus giving some insight into their lives, information in the *Railway Signal* revealed little of their personalities or personal circumstances. Although women may have been given a temporary platform, they were not given a voice. These articles were not 'pen portraits' but were third-party reports aimed at a conservative, religious readership. There was strict patriarchal control of content and context with little opportunity to see behind the patriarchal portrayal of the idealised Mission's 'lady friend.'

It has also been difficult to gauge the views and feelings of the men's wives. The rhetoric of Mission records celebrated success when a man and his wife were converted and, as noted in Chapter 3, Mission leaders had some success in the use of railwaymen's wives as a form of agency in persuading men to attend Mission meetings and events. Beyond this, lack of information has prevented any understanding of the more general ways in which the men's wives viewed the work of the Mission's women leaders. It would be interesting to know, for example, the extent to which the men's wives supported the women's work even when their husbands had no desire to become involved in the Railway Mission or whether they resented the intrusion in to their lives when, for example, middle-class women from the Mission undertook house-to-house visiting. It is difficult to know how these limitations can be addressed. The limited information available about working-class lives, and particularly working-class women's lives, in the form of letters and diaries, for example, has been a common problem, particularly in relation to research on the recipients of middle-class philanthropy. Whilst this thesis has been able to make some progress in exploring and assessing the views and perceptions of those working-class railwaymen who became Mission members, the void in relation to railwaymen's wives and those men who did not join the Mission has yet to be addressed.

The potential for further research in other areas is more positive. There is scope for more in-depth research into the lives and work of some of the Mission's leading women such as Elizabeth Gates in Brighton, Mary Briggs in Wakefield and the Walker sisters in Leicester. Whilst there appears to be little biographical information about these women, it is possible that further more detailed research at local level through, for example, local newspaper or business reports may reveal more about their family and lives. Similarly it is possible that further information may be found about the railwaymen's wives who were active in Mission work. Whilst this thesis has, for example, considered the work of engine-driver's wife, Jane Machin in Burton-on-Trent, it has not been possible within the scope of this research to explore the lives of other working-class women for whom little information is given in Mission records. Moving forward, it may be possible to trace these women through their husbands in, for example, research into railway employment records. It would be interesting to discover the extent to which their work mirrored or differed from that of the Mission's middle-class female leaders and additional information about working-class women's participation in Railway Mission work would also facilitate a more in-depth consideration of the cross-class collaboration which has been highlighted as a finding in this research.

There is also scope to extend this research geographically and chronologically. This thesis has illustrated the ways in which digitalised records have enabled me to explore the lives of a large number of women living in England during the twenty-year period from 1881 to 1901. Further progress in the digitalisation of records may facilitate research into the lives of female Mission leaders working in other areas of Britain. For example, records show that there were active Mission branches in Scotland, Wales and Ireland during the period under review but the digitisation of census records is not yet sufficiently detailed to enable meaningful correlations to be drawn between Mission and census records in these countries. This is an area which may be addressed in the future. Similarly, references are made in Mission records to the establishment of foreign Railway Mission branches in such diverse locations as South Africa, Australia, Chile, Japan, Switzerland and India. Further research may reveal the extent to which women were involved as foreign missionaries in these overseas branches of the Railway Mission. Additionally, whilst Mission records are available beyond the period under review, it has only been possible to use census

data up to 1911. Census records for 1921 should become available in 2021, possibly slightly earlier. Advances in technology have greatly improved access to this type of information and it seems likely that further developments will lead to increasing access to census and similar genealogical information for the next ten-year period. This will allow Mission records to be correlated with census information to facilitate a detailed exploration of the work and lives of the Mission's female leaders in the first two decades of the twentieth century.

This thesis has opened the door to the Railway Mission and has provided a detailed insight into the lives and work of a significant number of women who were involved with the organization in the first twenty years of its life. It has paved the way for further research into women's work with railwaymen in other geographical areas and into the ways in which they undertook religious work with the men employed on the railway in the early years of the twentieth century. This was a period of significant change as the industry moved from its Victorian heyday with large numbers of disparate companies through a transitional period when competition from motorised forms of transport led, in 1923, to the consolidation of the railway network into four large companies, the London and North Western, the London, Midland and Scottish, the Great Western and the Southern Railway. There is, therefore, scope for further research on a number of fronts and into a number of issues.

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## Appendices

**Appendix 1**  
**Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881 - 1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Amys, Annie I	1863	Single	Tunbridge Wells and Three Bridges	Superintendent	Alone
Ballard, Ellen	1823	Widow	Walton on Thames	Benefactor	Family
Beckwith, Harriet	1839	Widow	Margate	Superintendent	Alone
Bennett, Emily G	1820	Married	Plymouth	Drawing Room Mtg.	Couple
Bennet, Mary Ann	1849	Married	Cheltenham	Superintendent	Family
Benson, Hannah M	1832	Single	Weymouth	Superintendent	Alone
Berrington, Isabella	1827	Widow	Wolverhampton	Missioner	Family
Binyon, Gulielma	1857	Single	Worcester	Entertainment	Family
Binyon, Margaret	1860	Single	Worcester	Entertainment	Family
Boardman, Alice	1863	Single	Stratford	Superintendent	Family
Boardman, Annie	1870	Single	Stratford	Missioner	Family
Bothams, Isabella	1832	Married	Salisbury	Missioner	Alone
Boyce, Elizabeth	1846	Married	Ely	Superintendent	Alone
Brackett, Catherine M	1864	Single	Tunbridge Wells	Missioner	Family
Brackett, Edith	1866	Single	Tunbridge Wells	Missioner	Family
Briggs, Mary E	1852	Single	Wakefield and Ardsley	Superintendent	Family
Brock. Bessie S	1866	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Bryden, Jane E	1855	Single	Wimbledon	Superintendent	Alone
Buchanan, Florence	1862	Single	Bristol Weston Super Mare	R S Agent	Alone
Buckley, Margaret	1857	Single	Mare	Entertainment	Alone
Burton, Agnes	1851	Single	Great Yarmouth	Superintendent	Family
Burton, Annie	1840	Single	Selby	Supporter	Family
Burton, Fanny	1842	Single	Selby	Superintendent/Sec.	Family
Caldecott, Jane E	1832	Single	Lowestoft	Missioner	Friendship
Cambie, Mary E	1840	Widow	Leeds and London Swindon, Derby and Hastings	Missioner	Family
Casswell, Amy	1871	Single	Boston	Superintendent	Household
Casswell, Eva	1880	Single	Leeds, Bradford and York	Missioner	Family
Caswell, Margaret	1878	Single	Leeds and Bradford	Superintendent	Family
Caswell, Ruth	1869	Single	Bromley	Superintendent	Family
Cawston, Edith M	1875	Single	Folkestone	Leader	Alone
Checkley, Annie	1856	Single	Halifax	Missioner/Secretary	Alone
Cheeseman, Ellen	1863	Single		Superintendent	Alone

Chitham, Jenny M	1855	Single	Colchester	Superintendent	Family
Churchill, Gertrude	1860	Single	Folkestone	Missioner	Alone
Clapham, Esther M	1833	Widow	Newcastle on Tyne	Missioner	Alone
Coker, Alice M	1852	Single	Brighton	Missioner	Alone
Cosens, Emily	1856	Single	Weymouth	Secretary	Alone
Cott, Katherine E	1866	Single	Bristol	Leader	Alone
Cowie, Emily	1872	Single	Swindon	Superintendent	Household
Crosher, Mary Ann	1848	Married	Melton Mowbray	Secretary/Supt.	Couple
Crowther, Annie S	1851	Single	Leamington	Superintendent Asst.	Friendship
Currie, Lily	1836	Single	Leamington	Superintendent	Friendship
Dains, Mary	1829	Single	Ipswich	Missioner	Alone
Dixon, Eliza G	1866	Single	Eccles & Patricroft	Superintendent	Family
Dixon, Eliza M	1858	Single	Salisbury	Superintendent	Alone
Dolby, Florence	1853	Single	Convalescent Home	Superintendent	Alone
Doswell, Rose E	1864	Single	Various	Missioner	Alone
Dow, Margaret	1826	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Dunne, Mary I	1861	Single	Nottingham	Superintendent	Family
Duranty, Jane	1819	Single	West Kirby	Supporter	Alone
Easterfield, Mary H	1862	Single	Doncaster	Missioner	Family
Eck, Blanche L	1854	Single	West Brompton	Missioner	Family
Ellis, Emily R	1868	Single	Norwich and Bishopsgate	Superintendent	Family
Ellison, Frances B	1861	Single	West Kirby	Superintendent	Family
Ellison, Margaret F	1862	Single	West Kirby	Superintendent	Family
Everett, Mary	1841	Single	Ipswich	R S Agent/Supporter	Alone
Forward, Harriett	1834	Married	Wimborne	Leader	Alone
Fothergill, Ann	1851	Single	Darlington	Supporter	Alone
Gardiner, Harriett S	1841	Single	Hastings	Superintendent	Alone
Garnett, Rebecca	1854	Married	Tynemouth	Missioner	Alone
Gates, Elizabeth B	1828	Married	Brighton	Superintendent	Family
Gerds, Margaret	1851	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Gilder, Jane	1855	Single	Nottingham, Leeds and Gateshead	Superintendent	Alone
Goody, Mary E	1847	Married	Colchester	Missioner	Couple
Gorham, Mary C	1853	Single	Tonbridge	Missioner	Alone
Gowan, Anna L	1857	Single	Emscote	Superintendent	Family
Gowan, Caroline E	1852	Single	Emscote	Missioner	Family
Grayson, Lavinia	1855	Single	Bradford	Superintendent	Alone
Gunner, Janet M	1856	Single	Eastleigh	Supporter	Alone
Gurney, Helen	1848	Married	Gateshead	Missioner	Alone
Gurney, Fanny	1854	Married	Tonbridge	Superintendent	Family
Haddow, Grace W	1850	Single	Margate	Superintendent	Alone
Hall, Edith E	1874	Single	Leeds	Missioner	Alone
Hammond, Sophie	1839	Single	Fakenham	Accommodation	Alone
Head, Caroline	1853	Married	Various	Missioner	Couple

Heal, Hannah	1842	Married	Wavertree Platelayers	Superintendent	Alone
Hoste, Jane M	1824	Single	Mission	Missioner	Alone
Howett, Annie	1844	Single	Lowestoft	R S Agent	Alone
Hurnard, Rose	1870	Married	Colchester	Supporter	Alone
Irton, Mabel Turner	1853	Single	Brighton	Author/Missioner	Alone
Jeram, Mary A	1860	Single	Havant	Superintendent	Alone
Kealey, Fanny M	1870	Single	Gosport	Superintendent	Alone
Keighley, Isabella M	1851	Single	Guildford	Missioner	Family
Keighley, Lucy F	1853	Single	Guildford	Missioner	Family
Kidley, Harriett H	1876	Single	Crewe	Superintendent	Alone
Kilbee, Blanche S	1860	Widow	Weston Super Mare	Superintendent	Alone
Kinnaird, Emily	1855	Single	New Cross, London	Entertainment	Family
Kinnaird, Gertrude M	1853	Single	New Cross, London	Entertainment	Family
Kinnaird, Louisa E	1848	Single	New Cross, London	Entertainment	Family
Knight, Elizabeth	1833	Married	London	Missioner	Family
Krell, Maria A	1831	Married	Waterloo	Entertainment	Couple
Laycock, Fanny C	1862	Single	Keighley	Superintendent	Family
Laycock, Louisa	1861	Single	Keighley	Missioner	Family
Leakey, Alice M	1866	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Leith, Eleanor A	1837	Separated	Horsham	Superintendent	Alone
Long, Beatrice	1849	Single	Lowestoft	Missioner	Friendship
Loud, Jane	1838	Single	Dover	Entertainment	Household
Machin, Jane	1850	Married	Burton on Trent	RS Agent/Author	Couple
Mackie, Edith G	1853	Single	Wakefield	Supporter	Family
Mackie, Mary E	1844	Single	Wakefield	Supporter	Family
MacPherson, Annie	1825	Single	London	Entertainment	Household
Maddicks, Ruth	1847	Single	Dover	Superintendent	Household
Mailing, Edith	1841	Married	N/A	Author	Alone
March, Annie E	1859	Single	Leeds	Missioner	Alone
Marriott, Gertrude	1861	Married	Melton Constable	Entertainment	Couple
Matrass, Elizabeth	1858	Married	Newton Abbot	Missioner	Couple
Melville, Albinia	1832	Married	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Melville, Constance	1861	Single	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Melville, Edith	1854	Single	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Middlemass, Blanche	1858	Single	Cheltenham	Missioner	Family
Middlemass, Ethel	1861	Single	Cheltenham	Superintendent	Family
Milln, Mary J	1855	Single	Croydon	Superintendent	Alone
Moore, Agnes E	1848	Single	Platelayers Mission	Missioner	Alone
Morris, Gertrude	1835	Married	Doncaster	President/Supt.	Alone
Moxon, Eva M	1869	Single	Ilfracombe and Barnstaple	Superintendent and Secretary	Family

Moxon, Mabel K	1870	Single	Ilfracombe	Missioner	Family
Mumford, Louisa	1850	Married	Norwich Thorpe	Missioner	Family
Newnham, Kate H	1868	Single	Plymouth	Leader	Alone
Norris, Florence N	1858	Single	Deal and Walmer	Superintendent	Alone
Noyes, Mary C	1859	Single	Ashford	Superintendent	Alone
Oriel, Georgiana	1847	Single	Worthing	Superintendent	Family
Oriel, Henrietta	1840	Single	Worthing	Missioner	Family
Oriel, Sarah	1843	Single	Worthing	Missioner	Family
Overy, Kate	1857	Single	Shrewesbury	Superintendent	Family
Overy, Martha	1860	Single	Shrewesbury	Supporter	Family
Parrott, Sarah	1848	Single	Stockton on Tees	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Peckover, Alexandrina	1862	Single	Wisbech	Superintendent	Family
Peckover, Algerina	1842	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Peckover, Anna	1863	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Peckover, Priscilla	1834	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Peckover, Wilhelmina	1845	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Pepper, Ellen W	1842	Married	Salisbury	Missioner	Alone
Pettman, Grace	1870	Single	Ramsgate and Swindon	Superintendent and Author	Alone
Pollard, Elizabeth	1825	Widow	Wisbech	President	Alone
Pope, Edith G	1867	Single	Brighton	Missioner	Alone
Postlethwaite, Julia	1822	Widow	Leamington	Supporter	Family
Postlethwaite, Julia	1851	Single	Leamington	Supporter	Family
Probyn, Aramintha	1839	Married	Three Bridges	R S Agent	Family
Protheroe, Blanche C	1848	Single	West Brompton	Missioner	Alone
Raikes, Mabel	1864	Single	Watford	Superintendent	Alone
Reaney, Isabella	1847	Married	N/A	Author	Alone
Ridley, Caroline R	1845	Widow	Bury St Edmunds	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Rutley, Mary L	1851	Single	Barnstaple	Leader	Alone
Saunders, Emma	1841	Single	Bristol	Superintendent	Alone
Scott, Anne	1836	Widow	Eastbourne	Supporter	Family
Scott, Edith M	1870	Single	Eastbourne	Secretary/Supt.	Family
Scott, Janet E	1863	Single	Eastbourne	Superintendent	Family
Scott, Jessie R	1822	Single	Eastbourne	Missioner	Family
Sebright, Olive	1848	Married	Brighton	Supporter	Alone
Shadwell, Florentina	1830	Married	Hastings	Author/Missioner	Alone
Shann, Laura I	1863	Single	York	Superintendent	Family
Shann, Lucy H	1854	Single	York	Missioner	Family
Sharp, Helen M L	1862	Married	Newcastle on Tyne	Drawing Room Mtg	Alone
Skipton, Mary E	1846	Married	Uxbridge Road and Willesden Junction	Superintendent	Family
Soltau, Henrietta	1844	Single	Hastings	Missioner	Alone
Spreat Helen M W	1852	Single	Exeter	Superintendent	Alone
Squire, Julia	1868	Single	Gateshead	Secretary	Alone
Suttley, Elizabeth C	1859	Single	Bermondsey	Superintendent	Alone
Standerling, Mary	1853	Single	Selby	Supporter	Alone

Standfield, Clarice K	1873	Single	Exeter New Cross,	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Steinitz, Alice	1860	Single	London	Missioner	Alone
Swift, Annie	1851	Single	Southport	Superintendent	Family
Swift, Constance	1856	Married	Southport	Drawing Room Mtg	Family
Sykes, Josephine M	1883	Single	Brighton	Supporter	Family
Sykes, Sarah M	1848	Married	Brighton	Supporter	Family
Thistleton, Emmeline	1865	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Thornton, Alice F	1851	Single	Dorchester	Missioner	Alone
Tinling, Mary Ann	1837	Single	Southsea	R S Agent	Alone
Tuckett, Clara A	1852	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Tilby, Edith	1856	Single	Westbourne Park, Dublin, Clapham and	Superintendent Horsham	Alone
Tupholme, Edith	1868	Single	Boston	Superintendent	Family
Walker, Emma	1843	Single	Leicester	President	Family
Walker, Fanny	1841	Single	Leicester Hockley,	Missioner	Family
Wedgewood, Margt.	1831	Married	Birmingham	Missioner	Family
Westlake, Elizabeth	1829	Married	Southampton	Missioner	Alone
Whitley, Margherita	1866	Married	Halifax	President	Family
Whitley, Mary	1868	Single	Halifax	Supporter	Family
Williams, Mary R	1856	Single	Bath	Superintendent	Family
Wilkes, Edna	1841	Married	Crewe	Missioner	Alone
Wilkins, Mary P	1830	Married	Cheltenham	Accommodation	Alone
Wingfield Digby, A	1860	Single	Bournemouth	Missioner	Family
Wingfield Digby, C	1861	Single	Bournemouth	Missioner	Family
Wingfield Digby, HM	1868	Single	Tamworth	Missioner	Family
Wray, Mabel E	1872	Single	Bradford	Superintendent	Household

**Appendix 2**  
**Single Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881 - 1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Amys, Annie	1863	Single	Tunbridge Wells and Three Bridges	Superintendent	Alone
Benson, Hannah M	1832	Single	Weymouth	Superintendent	Alone
Binyon, Gulielma	1857	Single	Worcester	Entertainment	Family
Binyon, Margaret	1860	Single	Worcester	Entertainment	Family
Boardman, Alice	1863	Single	Stratford	Superintendent	Family
Boardman, Annie	1870	Single	Stratford	Missioner	Family
Brackett, Catherine M	1864	Single	Tunbridge Wells	Missioner	Family
Brackett, Edith	1866	Single	Tunbridge Wells	Missioner	Family
Briggs, Mary E	1852	Single	Wakefield and Ardsley	Superintendent	Family
Brock. Bessie S	1866	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Bryden, Jane E	1855	Single	Wimbledon	Superintendent	Alone
Buchanan, Florence	1862	Single	Bristol	R S Agent	Alone
Buckley, Margaret	1857	Single	Weston Super Mare	Entertainment	Alone
Burton, Agnes	1851	Single	Great Yarmouth	Superintendent	Family
Burton, Annie	1840	Single	Selby	Supporter	Family
Burton, Fanny	1842	Single	Selby	Superintendent/Sec.	Family
Caldecott, Jane E	1832	Single	Lowestoft	Missioner	Friendship
Casswell, Amy	1871	Single	Swindon, Derby and Hastings	Superintendent	Household
Casswell, Eva	1880	Single	Boston	Missioner	Family
Caswell, Margaret	1878	Single	Leeds, Bradford and York	Superintendent	Family
Caswell, Ruth	1869	Single	Leeds and Bradford	Superintendent	Family
Cawston, Edith M	1875	Single	Bromley	Leader	Alone
Checkley, Annie	1856	Single	Folkestone	Missioner/Secretary	Alone
Cheeseman, Ellen	1863	Single	Halifax	Superintendent	Alone
Chitham, Jenny M	1855	Single	Colchester	Superintendent	Family
Churchill, Gertrude	1860	Single	Folkestone	Missioner	Alone
Coker, Alice M	1852	Single	Brighton	Missioner	Alone
Cosens, Emily	1856	Single	Weymouth	Secretary	Alone
Cott, Katherine E	1866	Single	Bristol	Leader	Alone
Cowie, Emily	1872	Single	Swindon	Superintendent	Household
Crowther, Annie S	1851	Single	Leamington	Superintendent Asst.	Friendship
Curry, Lily	1836	Single	Leamington	Superintendent	Friendship
Dains, Mary	1829	Single	Ipswich	Missioner	Alone

Dixon, Eliza G	1866	Single	Eccles & Patricroft	Superintendent	Family
Dixon, Eliza M	1858	Single	Salisbury	Superintendent	Alone
			Convalescent		
Dolby, Florence	1853	Single	Home	Superintendent	Alone
Doswell, Rose E	1864	Single	Various	Missioner	Alone
Dow, Margaret	1826	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Dunne, Mary I	1861	Single	Nottingham	Superintendent	Family
Duranty, Jane	1819	Single	West Kirby	Supporter	Alone
Easterfield, Mary H	1862	Single	Doncaster	Missioner	Family
Eck, Blanche L	1854	Single	West Brompton	Missioner	Family
Ellis, Emily R	1868	Single	Norwich and	Superintendent	Family
			Bishopsgate		
Ellison, Frances B	1861	Single	West Kirby	Superintendent	Family
Ellison, Margaret F	1862	Single	West Kirby	Superintendent	Family
Everett, Mary	1841	Single	Ipswich	R S Agent/Supporter	Alone
Fothergill, Ann	1851	Single	Darlington	Supporter	Alone
Gardiner, Harriett S	1841	Single	Hastings	Superintendent	Alone
Gerds, Margaret	1851	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Gilder, Jane	1855	Single	Nottingham, Leeds	Superintendent	Alone
			and Gateshead		
Gorham, Mary C	1853	Single	Tonbridge	Missioner	Alone
Gowan, Anna L	1857	Single	Emscote	Superintendent	Family
Gowan, Caroline E	1852	Single	Emscote	Missioner	Family
Grayson, Lavinia	1855	Single	Bradford	Superintendent	Alone
Gunner, Janet M	1856	Single	Eastleigh	Supporter	Alone
Haddow, Grace W	1850	Single	Margate	Superintendent	Alone
Hall, Edith E	1874	Single	Leeds	Missioner	Alone
Hammond, Sophie	1839	Single	Fakenham	Accommodation	Alone
			Platelayers'		
Hoste, Jane M	1824	Single	Mission	Missioner	Alone
Howett, Annie	1844	Single	Lowestoft	R S Agent	Alone
Irton, Mabel Turner	1853	Single	Brighton	Author/Missioner	Alone
Jeram, Mary A	1860	Single	Havant	Superintendent	Alone
Kealey, Fanny M	1870	Single	Gosport	Superintendent	Alone
Keighley, Isabella M	1851	Single	Guildford	Missioner	Family
Keighley, Lucy F	1853	Single	Guildford	Missioner	Family
Kidley, Harriett H	1876	Single	Crewe	Superintendent	Alone
			New Cross,		
Kinnaird, Emily	1855	Single	London	Missioner	Family
			New Cross,		
Kinnaird, Gertrude M	1853	Single	London	Missioner	Family
			New Cross,		
Kinnaird, Louisa E	1848	Single	London	Missioner	Family
Laycock, Fanny C	1862	Single	Keighley	Superintendent	Family
Laycock, Louisa	1861	Single	Keighley	Missioner	Family
Leakey, Alice M	1866	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Long, Beatrice	1849	Single	Lowestoft	Missioner	Friendship

Loud, Jane	1838	Single	Dover	Entertainment	Household
Mackie, Edith G	1853	Single	Wakefield	Supporter	Family
Mackie, Mary E	1844	Single	Wakefield	Supporter	Family
MacPherson, Annie	1825	Single	London	Entertainment	Household
Maddicks, Ruth	1847	Single	Dover	Superintendent	Household
March, Annie E	1859	Single	Leeds	Missioner	Alone
Melville, Constance	1861	Single	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Melville, Edith	1854	Single	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Middlemass, Blanche	1858	Single	Cheltenham	Missioner	Family
Middlemass, Ethel	1861	Single	Cheltenham	Superintendent	Family
Milln, Mary J	1855	Single	Croydon	Superintendent	Alone
			Platelayers'		
Moore, Agnes E	1848	Single	Mission	Missioner	Alone
Moxon, Eva M	1869	Single	Ilfracombe	Superintendent	Family
			and Barnstaple	and Secretary	
Moxon, Mabel K	1870	Single	Ilfracombe	Missioner	Family
Newnham, Kate H	1868	Single	Plymouth	Leader	Alone
Norris, Florence N	1858	Single	Deal and Walmer	Superintendent	Alone
Noyes, Mary C	1859	Single	Ashford	Superintendent	Alone
Oriel, Georgiana	1847	Single	Worthing	Superintendent	Family
Oriel, Henrietta	1840	Single	Worthing	Missioner	Family
Oriel, Sarah	1843	Single	Worthing	Missioner	Family
Overy, Kate	1857	Single	Shrewesbury	Superintendent	Family
Overy, Martha	1860	Single	Shrewesbury	Supporter	Family
Parrott, Sarah	1848	Single	Stockton on Tees	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Peckover, Alexandrina	1862	Single	Wisbech	Superintendent	Family
Peckover, Algerina	1842	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Peckover, Anna	1863	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Peckover, Priscilla	1834	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Peckover, Wilhelmina	1845	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Pettman, Grace	1870	Single	Ramsgate and	Superintendent	Alone
			Swindon	and Author	
Pope, Edith G	1867	Single	Brighton	Missioner	Alone
Postlethwaite, Julia	1851	Single	Leamington	Supporter	Family
Protheroe, Blanche C	1848	Single	West Brompton	Missioner	Alone
Raikes, Mabel	1864	Single	Watford	Superintendent	Alone
Rutley, Mary L	1851	Single	Barnstaple	Leader	Alone
Saunders, Emma	1841	Single	Bristol	Superintendent	Alone
Scott, Edith M	1870	Single	Eastbourne	Secretary/Supt.	Family
Scott, Janet E	1863	Single	Eastbourne	Superintendent	Family
Scott, Jessie R	1822	Single	Eastbourne	Missioner	Family
Shann, Laura I	1863	Single	York	Superintendent	Family
Shann, Lucy H	1854	Single	York	Missioner	Family
Soltau, Henrietta	1844	Single	Hastings	Missioner	Alone
Spreat, Helen M W	1852	Single	Exeter	Superintendent	Alone
Squire, Julia	1868	Single	Gateshead	Secretary	Alone

Suttley, Elizabeth C	1859	Single	Bermondsey	Superintendent	Alone
Standerling, Mary	1853	Single	Selby	Supporter	Alone
Standfield, Clarice K	1873	Single	Exeter	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Steinitz, Alice	1860	Single	New Cross, London	Missioner	Alone
Swift, Annie	1851	Single	Southport	Superintendent	Family
Sykes, Josephine M	1883	Single	Brighton	Supporter	Family
Thistleton, Emmeline	1865	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Thornton, Alice F	1851	Single	Dorchester	Missioner	Alone
Tinling, Mary Ann	1837	Single	Southsea	R S Agent	Alone
Tuckett, Clara A	1852	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Tilby, Edith	1856	Single	Westbourne Park, Dublin, Clapham and Horsham	Superintendent	Alone
Tupholme, Edith	1868	Single	Boston	Superintendent	Family
Walker, Emma	1843	Single	Leicester	President	Family
Walker, Fanny	1841	Single	Leicester	Missioner	Family
Whitley, Mary	1868	Single	Halifax	Supporter	Family
Williams, Mary R	1856	Single	Bath	Superintendent	Alone
Wingfield Digby, A	1860	Single	Bournemouth	Missioner	Family
Wingfield Digby, C	1861	Single	Bournemouth	Missioner	Family
Wingfield Digby, HM	1868	Single	Tamworth	Missioner	Family
Wray, Mabel E	1872	Single	Bradford	Superintendent	Household

**Appendix 3**  
**Married Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881 - 1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Bennett, Emily G	1820	Married	Plymouth	Drawing Room Mtg.	Couple
Bennet, Mary Ann	1849	Married	Cheltenham	Superintendent	Family
Bothams, Isabella	1832	Married	Salisbury	Missioner	Alone
Boyce, Elizabeth	1846	Married	Ely	Superintendent	Alone
Crosher, Mary Ann	1848	Married	Melton Mowbray	Secretary/Supt.	Couple
Forward, Harriett	1834	Married	Wimborne	Leader	Alone
Garnett, Rebecca	1854	Married	Tynemouth	Missioner	Alone
Gates, Elizabeth B	1828	Married	Brighton	Superintendent	Family
Goody, Mary E	1847	Married	Colchester	Missioner	Couple
Gurney, Helen	1848	Married	Gateshead	Missioner	Alone
Gurney, Fanny	1854	Married	Tonbridge	Superintendent	Family
Head, Caroline	1853	Married	Various	Missioner	Couple
Heal, Hannah	1842	Married	Wavertree	Superintendent	Alone
Hurnard, Rose	1870	Married	Colchester	Supporter	Alone
Knight, Elizabeth	1833	Married	London	Missioner	Family
Krell, Maria A	1831	Married	Waterloo	Entertainment	Couple
Machin, Jane	1850	Married	Burton on Trent	R S Agent/Author	Couple
Mailing, Edith	1841	Married	N/A	Author	Alone
Marriott, Gertrude	1861	Married	Melton Constable	Entertainment	Couple
Mattrass, Elizabeth	1858	Married	Newton Abbot	Missioner	Couple
Melville, Albinia	1832	Married	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Morris, Gertrude	1835	Married	Doncaster	President/Supt.	Alone
Mumford, Louisa	1850	Married	Norwich Thorpe	Missioner	Family
Pepper, Ellen W	1842	Married	Salisbury	Missioner	Alone
Probyn, Aramintha	1839	Married	Three Bridges	R S Agent	Family
Reaney, Isabella	1847	Married	N/A	Author	Alone
Sebright, Olive	1848	Married	Brighton	Supporter	Alone
Shadwell, Florentina	1830	Married	Hastings	Author/Missioner	Alone
Sharp, Helen M L	1862	Married	Newcastle on Tyne	Drawing Room Mtg	Alone
Skipton, Mary E	1846	Married	Uxbridge Road and Willesden Junction	Superintendent	Family
Swift, Constance	1856	Married	Southport	Drawing Room Mtg	Family
Sykes, Sarah M	1848	Married	Brighton	Supporter	Family
Wedgewood, Margt.	1831	Married	Hockley, Birmingham	Missioner	Family

Westlake, Elizabeth	1829	Married	Southampton	Missioner	Alone
Whitley, Margherita	1866	Married	Halifax	President	Alone
Wilkes, Edna	1841	Married	Crewe	Missioner	Alone
Wilkins, Mary P	1830	Married	Cheltenham	Accommodation	Alone

**Appendix 4**  
**Widowed Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881 - 1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Ballard, Ellen	1823	Widow	Walton on Thames	Benefactor	Family
Beckwith, Harriet Berrington, Isabella	1839	Widow	Margate	Superintendent	Alone
Cambie, Mary E	1827	Widow	Wolverhampton	Missioner	Family
Clapham, Esther M	1840	Widow	Leeds and London	Missioner	Family
Kilbee, Blanche S	1833	Widow	Newcastle on Tyne	Missioner	Alone
Leith, Eleanor A	1860	Widow	Weston Super Mare	Superintendent	Alone
Pollard, Elizabeth Postlethwaite, Julia	1837	Separated	Horsham	Superintendent	Alone
Ridley, Caroline	1825	Widow	Wisbech	President	Alone
Scott, Anne	1822	Widow	Leamington	Supporter	Family
	1845	Widow	Bury St Edmunds	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
	1836	Widow	Eastbourne	Supporter	Family

**Appendix 5**  
**Age Profile of Single Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881-1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Duranty, Jane	1819	Single	West Kirby	Supporter	Alone
Scott, Jessie R	1822	Single	Eastbourne	Missioner	Family
Hoste, Jane M	1824	Single	Platelayers Mission	Missioner	Alone
MacPherson, Annie	1825	Single	London	Entertainment	Household
Dow, Margaret	1826	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Dains, Mary	1829	Single	Ipswich	Missioner	Alone
Caldecott, Jane E	1832	Single	Lowestoft	Missioner	Friendship
Benson, Hannah M	1832	Single	Weymouth	Superintendent	Alone
Peckover, Priscilla	1834	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
				Asst.	
Curry, Lily	1836	Single	Leamington	Superintendent	Friendship
Tinling. Mary Ann	1837	Single	Southsea	R S Agent	Alone
Loud, Jane	1838	Single	Dover	Entertainment	Household
Hammond, Sophie	1839	Single	Fakenham	Accommodation	Alone
Burton, Annie	1840	Single	Selby	Supporter	Family
Oriel, Henrietta	1840	Single	Worthing	Missioner	Family
				R S Agent,	
Everett, Mary	1841	Single	Ipswich	Supporter	Alone
Gardiner, Hariett S	1841	Single	Hastings	Superintendent	Alone
Saunders, Emma	1841	Single	Bristol	Superintendent	Alone
Walker, Fanny	1841	Single	Leicester	Missioner	Family
Burton, Fanny	1842	Single	Selby	Superintendent/Sec.	Family
Peckover, Algerina	1842	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Oriel, Sarah	1843	Single	Worthing	Missioner	Family
Walker, Emma	1843	Single	Leicester	President	Family
Howett, Annie	1844	Single	Lowestoft	R S Agent	Alone
Mackie, Mary E	1844	Single	Wakefield	Supporter	Family
Soltau, Henrietta	1844	Single	Hastings	Missioner	Alone
Peckover, Wilhelmina	1845	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Maddicks, Ruth	1847	Single	Dover	Superintendent	Household
Oriel, Georgiana	1847	Single	Worthing	Superintendent	Family
Kinnaird, Louisa E	1848	Single	New Cross, London	Entertainment	Family
Moore, Agnes E	1848	Single	Platelayers Mission	Missioner	Alone
Parrott, Sarah	1848	Single	Stockton on Tees	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Protheroe, Blanche C	1848	Single	West Brompton	Missioner	Alone
Long, Beatrice	1849	Single	Lowestoft	Missioner	Friendship
Haddow, Grace W	1850	Single	Margate	Superintendent	Family
Burton, Agnes	1851	Single	Great Yarmouth	Superintendent	Alone
Crowther, Annie S	1851	Single	Leamington	Missioner	Friendship
Fothergill, Ann	1851	Single	Darlington	Missioner	Alone

Gerds, Margaret	1851	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Keighley, Isabella M	1851	Single	Guildford	Missioner	Family
Postlethwaite, Julia	1851	Single	Leamington	Supporter	Family
Rutley, Mary L	1851	Single	Barnstaple	Leader	Alone
Swift, Annie	1851	Single	Southport	Superintendent	Family
Thornton, Alice F	1851	Single	Dorchester	Missioner	Alone
Briggs, Mary E	1852	Single	Wakefield	Superintendent	Family
Coker, Alice M	1852	Single	Brighton	Missioner	Alone
Gowan, Caroline E	1852	Single	Emscote	Superintendent	Family
Spreat, Helen M W	1852	Single	Exeter	Superintendent	Alone
Tuckett, Clara A	1852	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Dolby, Florence	1853	Single	Convalescent Home	Superintendent	Alone
Gorham, Mary C	1853	Single	Tonbridge	Missioner	Alone
Irton, Mabel Turner	1853	Single	Brighton	Author/Missioner	Alone
Keighley, Lucy F	1853	Single	Guildford	Missioner	Family
Kinnaird, Gertrude M	1853	Single	New Cross, London	Entertainment	Family
Mackie, Edith G	1853	Single	Wakefield	Supporter	Family
Standerling, Mary	1853	Single	Selby	Supporter	Alone
Eck, Blanche L	1854	Single	West Brompton	Missioner	Family
Melville, Edith	1854	Single	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Shann, Lucy H	1854	Single	York	Missioner	Family
Bryden, Jane E	1855	Single	Wimbledon	Superintendent	Alone
Chitham, Jenny M	1855	Single	Colchester	Superintendent	Alone
Gilder, Jane	1855	Single	Nottingham, Leeds and Gateshead	Superintendent	Alone
Grayson, Lavinia	1855	Single	Bradford	Superintendent	Alone
Kinnaird, Emily	1855	Single	New Cross, London	Entertainment	Family
Milln, Mary J	1855	Single	Croydon	Superintendent	Alone
Checkley, Annie	1856	Single	Folkestone	Missioner/Secretary	Alone
Cosens, Emily	1856	Single	Weymouth	Secretary	Alone
Gunner, Janet M	1856	Single	Eastleigh	Supporter	Alone
Tilby, Edith	1856	Single	Westbourne Park, Dublin, Clapham and Horsham	Superintendent	Alone
Williams, Mary R	1856	Single	Bath	Superintendent	Alone
Binyon, Gulielma	1857	Single	Worcester	Entertainment	Family
Buckley, Margaret	1857	Single	Weston Super Mare	Entertainment	Alone
Gowan, Anna L	1857	Single	Emscote	Superintendent	Family
Overy, Kate	1857	Single	Shrewesbury	Superintendent	Family
Dixon, Eliza M	1858	Single	Salisbury	Superintendent	Alone
Middlemass, Blanche	1858	Single	Cheltenham	Missioner	Family
Norris, Florence N	1858	Single	Deal and Walmer	Superintendent	Alone
March, Annie E	1859	Single	Leeds	Missioner	Alone
Noyes, Mary C	1859	Single	Ashford	Superintendent	Alone
Suttley, Elizabeth C	1859	Single	Bermondsey	Superintendent	Alone
Binyon, Margaret	1860	Single	Worcester	Entertainment	Family
Churchill, Gertrude	1860	Single	Folkestone	Missioner	Alone

Jeram, Mary A	1860	Single	Havant	Superintendent	Alone
Overy, Martha	1860	Single	Shrewesbury	Supporter	Family
Steinitz, Alice	1860	Single	New Cross, London	Missioner	Alone
Wingfield Digby, A	1860	Single	Bournemouth	Missioner	Family
Dunne, Mary I	1861	Single	Nottingham	Superintendent	Alone
Ellison, Frances B	1861	Single	West Kirby	Superintendent	Family
Laycock, Louisa	1861	Single	Keighley	Missioner	Family
Melville, Constance	1861	Single	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Middlemass, Ethel	1861	Single	Cheltenham	Superintendent	Family
Wingfield Digby C Buchanan,	1861	Single	Bournemouth	Missioner	Family
Florence Florence	1862	Single	Bristol	R S Agent	Alone
Easterfield, Mary H	1862	Single	Doncaster	Missioner	Alone
Ellison, Margaret	1862	Single	West Kirby	Superintendent	Family
Laycock, Fanny C	1862	Single	Keighley	Superintendent	Family
Peckover, Alexandrina	1862	Single	Wisbech	Superintendent	Family
Amys, Annie	1863	Single	Tunbridge Wells and Three Bridges	Superintendent	Alone
Boardman, Alice	1863	Single	Stratford	Superintendent	Family
Cheeseman, Ellen	1863	Single	Halifax	Superintendent	Alone
Peckover, Anna	1863	Single	Wisbech	Missioner	Family
Scott, Janet E	1863	Single	Eastbourne	Superintendent	Family
Shann, Laura I	1863	Single	York	Superintendent	Family
Brackett, Catherine M	1864	Single	Tunbridge Wells	Missioner	Family
Doswell, Rose E	1864	Single	Various	Missioner	Alone
Raikes, Mabel	1864	Single	Watford	Superintendent	Alone
Thistleton, Emmeline	1865	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Brackett, Edith	1866	Single	Tunbridge Wells	Missioner	Family
Brock. Bessie S	1866	Single	N/A	Author	Alone
Cott, Katherine E	1866	Single	Bristol	Leader	Alone
Dixon, Eliza G	1866	Single	Eccles & Patricroft	Superintendent	Family
Leakey, Alice M	1866	Single	N/A	Author	Family
Pope, Edith G	1867	Single	Brighton	Missioner	Alone
Ellis, Emily R	1868	Single	Norwich and Bishopsgate	Missioner	Family
Newnham, Kate H	1868	Single	Plymouth	Leader	Alone
Squire, Julia	1868	Single	Gateshead	Secretary	Alone
Tupholme, Edith	1868	Single	Boston	Superintendent	Family
Whitley, Mary	1868	Single	Halifax	Supporter	Family
Wingfield Digby, HM	1868	Single	Tamworth	Missioner	Family
Caswell, Ruth	1869	Single	Leeds and Bradford	Superintendent	Family
Moxon, Eva M	1869	Single	Ilfracombe and Barnstaple	Superintendent	Family
Boardman, Annie	1870	Single	Stratford	Supporter	Family
Kealey, Fanny M	1870	Single	Gosport	Superintendent	Alone
Moxon, Mabel K	1870	Single	Ilfracombe	Superintendent	Family

Pettman, Grace	1870	Single	Ramsgate and Swindon	Superintendent	Family
Scott, Edith M	1870	Single	Eastbourne	Secretary/Supt.	Family
Casswell, Amy	1871	Single	Swindon, Derby and Hastings	Superintendent	Household
Cowie, Emily	1872	Single	Swindon	Superintendent	Household
Wray, Mabel E	1872	Single	Bradford	Superintendent	Household
Standfield, Clarice	1873	Single	Exeter	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Hall, Edith E	1874	Single	Leeds	Missioner	Alone
Cawston, Edith M	1875	Single	Bromley	Leader	Alone
Kidley, Harriett H	1876	Single	Crewe	Superintendent	Alone
Caswell, Margaret	1878	Single	Leeds, Bradford and York	Superintendent	Family
Casswell. Eva	1880	Single	Boston	Missioner	Family
Sykes, Josephine M	1883	Single	Brighton	Supporter	Family

**Appendix 6**  
**Age Profile of Married Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881-1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Bennett, Emily G	1820	Married	Plymouth	Drawing Room Mtg.	Couple
Gates, Elizabeth B	1828	Married	Brighton	Superintendent	Family
Westlake, Elizabeth	1829	Married	Southampton	Missioner	Alone
Shadwell, Florentina	1830	Married	Hastings	Author/Missioner	Alone
Wilkins, Mary P	1830	Married	Cheltenham	Accommodation	Alone
Krell, Maria A	1831	Married	Waterloo	Missioner	Couple
Wedgewood, Margt.	1831	Married	Hockley, Birmingham	Missioner	Couple
Bothams, Isabella	1832	Married	Salisbury	Missioner	Alone
Melville, Albinia	1832	Married	Lincoln	Silent Messenger	Family
Knight, Elizabeth	1833	Married	London	Missioner	Family
Forward, Harriett	1834	Married	Wimborne	Leader	Alone
Morris, Gertrude	1835	Married	Doncaster	President	Alone
Probyn, Aramintha	1839	Married	Three Bridges	Missioner	Family
Mailing, Edith	1841	Married	N/A	Author	Alone
Wilkes, Edna	1841	Married	Crewe	Missioner	Alone
Heal, Hannah	1842	Married	Wavertree	Superintendent	Alone
Pepper, Ellen W	1842	Married	Salisbury	Missioner	Alone
Boyce, Elizabeth	1846	Married	Ely	Superintendent	Alone
Skipton, Mary E	1846	Married	Uxbridge Road and Willesden Junction	Superintendent	Family
Goody, Mary E	1847	Married	Colchester	Missioner	Couple
Reaney, Isabella	1847	Married	N/A	Author	Alone
Crosher, Mary Ann	1848	Married	Melton Mowbray	Superintendent	Couple
Gurney, Helen	1848	Married	Gateshead	Missioner	Alone
Sebright, Olive	1848	Married	Brighton	Supporter	Alone
Sykes, Sarah M	1848	Married	Brighton	Supporter	Family
Bennet, Mary Ann	1849	Married	Cheltenham	Superintendent	Alone
Machin, Jane	1850	Married	Burton on Trent	R S Agent/Author	Couple
Mumford, Louisa	1850	Married	Norwich Thorpe	Missioner	Family
Head, Caroline	1853	Married	Various	Missioner	Couple
Garnett, Rebecca	1854	Married	Tynemouth	Missioner	Alone
Gurney, Fanny	1854	Married	Tonbridge	Superintendent	Family
Swift, Constance	1856	Married	Southport	Drawing Room Mtg	Family
Mattress, Elizabeth	1858	Married	Newton Abbot	Missioner	Couple

Marriott, Gertrude	1861	Married	Melton Constable	Missioner Drawing Room	Couple
Sharp, Helen M L Whitley,	1862	Married	Newcastle on Tyne	Mtg	Alone
Margherita	1866	Married	Halifax	President	Alone
Hurnard, Rose	1870	Married	Colchester	Supporter	Alone

**Appendix 7**  
**Age Profile of Widowed Women Working in the Railway Mission 1881-1901**

Name	Year of Birth	Marital Status	Mission Branch	Role in Mission	Method of Working
Postlethwaite, Julia	1822	Widow	Leamington	Supporter	Family
Ballard, Ellen	1823	Widow	Walton on Thames	Benefactor	Family
Pollard, Elizabeth	1825	Widow	Wisbech	President	Alone
Berrington, Isabella	1827	Widow	Wolverhampton	Missioner	Family
Clapham, Esther M	1833	Widow	Newcastle on Tyne	Missioner	Alone
Scott, Anne	1836	Widow	Eastbourne	Supporter	Family
Leith, Eleanor A	1837	Separated	Horsham	Superintendent	Alone
Beckwith, Harriet	1839	Widow	Margate	Superintendent	Alone
Cambie, Mary E	1840	Widow	Leeds and London	Missioner	Family
Ridley, Caroline	1845	Widow	Bury St Edmunds	Secretary/Supt.	Alone
Kilbee, Blanche S	1860	Widow	Weston Super Mare	Superintendent	Alone

## Appendix 8

### Railway Mission Women with Paid Employment 1881 - 1901

Name	Year of Birth	Occupation	Census Year
Benson, Hannah	1832	Governess	1881
		Principal of School	1891/1901
Checkley, Annie s	1856	Lady Superintendent	1901
		London City Mission Home	
Chitham, Jenny M	1855	School Mistress	1881/1891
		Private School Governess	1901
Cosens, Emily	1856	Governess	1891
Dixon, Eliza M	1858	Shop Assistant, Father's Shop	1881
Dunne, Mary I	1861	Governess	1881/1891
Jeram, Mary	1860	Assistant Mistress in School	1891
		Lady Worker in Soldier's Home	1901
Maddicks, Ruth	1847	Partner in Ladies School	1881
		Companion to Jane Loud	1891
Parrot, Sarah	1841	Ladies Hairdresser	1881
Pettman, Grace	1870	Teacher of Music	1891
		Author	1901
Ridley, Caroline	1845	Coal and Iron Merchant	1901
Spreat, Helen MW	1852	Assistant in Blind School	1881
		School Teacher	1891
Standfield, Clarice K	1873	Governess	1891
Tilby, Edith	1856	Teacher	1881
Tuckett, Clara	1852	Governess	1881

## Appendix 9

### Women Employed by the Railway Mission 1881 - 1901

Name	Year of Birth	Date Appointed		Railway Mission Branch	Annual Salary
Noyes, Mary C	1859	July	1890	Ashford	£80
Bowman, Miss FJ	Not Known	May	1892	Bath	£25
Tilby, Edith	1856	October	1893	Dublin	£70
		July	1894	Westbourne Park	Not known
		January	1899	Horsham	£60
Clifford, Miss	Not Known	December	1892	Bradford	Not known
Aslin, Miss	Not Known	February	1893	Liverpool	£35
Coker, Alice	1852	June	1893	Special Missions	Not known
Milner, Miss	Not Known	October	1893	Bradford	£52
Gowan, Caroline	1852	May	1894	Emscote	£40
Davidson, Miss MJ	Not Known	November	1894	Leeds	£45
Standfield, Clarice K	1873	May	1895	King's Cross	£70
Gilder, Jane	1855	September	1895	Leeds	£70
		June	1900	Gateshead	Not known
Chadwick, Miss	Not Known	November	1896	Southsea	£40
Baker, Miss	Not Known	March	1897	Croydon	£40
Casswell, Margaret	1878	August	1897	Leeds	£70
		March	1899	Bradford	Not known
		October	1901	York	Not known
Howard, Miss	Not Known	April	1898	Derby	£70
Glover, Miss	Not Known	April	1898	Cheltenham	£80
Cheeseman, Ellen	1863	September	1898	Halifax	£65
Kilbee, Blanche	1860	September	1898	District Worker South Western District	£20
Casswell, Ruth	1869	December	1898	Swindon	£70
		November	1899	Bradford	£70
Hall, Edith	1874	March	1899	Leeds	£65

Bristow, Miss N	Not Known	February	1900	Birmingham	Not Known
Clarke, Miss ML	Not Known	May	1900	Hastings	Not Known
Casswell, Amy	1871	May	1900	Swindon	£70
Millen, Miss AM	Not Known	June	1900	Exeter	£30