

**Connecting Women's Histories: the local and the global**

BUSH, Barbara and PURVIS, June

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**Citation:**

BUSH, Barbara and PURVIS, June (2016). Connecting Women's Histories: the local and the global. *Women's History Review*, 25 (4), 493-498. [Article]

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**Feminising empire? British women's activist networks in defending and challenging empire from 1918 to decolonisation.**

**Abstract**

*This article addresses female activism spanning the empire and creating interconnected networks linking the local and global dimensions of Britain's imperial mission in an era of increasing uncertainty. The transition from empire to commonwealth and, ultimately, independence was marked by anti-colonial challenges from within Britain and in the colonies and threats to empire from international developments post-1918. This era also witnessed a more pro-active role for women as both defenders and critics of empire who had an influence on shaping a new discourse of welfare and development, purportedly a 'feminisation' of empire. Continuities existed between female activism pre- and post-1918 but also significant differences as the late imperial era witness more nuanced and diverse interventions into empire affairs than the 'maternalist imperial feminism' of the era before the First World War.*

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## Introduction

In a masculinist imperial culture white women were commonly regarded as 'the ruin of empire',<sup>1</sup> potential threats to racial boundaries or disruptive of male culture in the colonies and interfering 'do-gooders' in the metropolitan centre. Yet women's activism was arguably important in both defending and challenging empire. Elite women's activism in furthering the imperial project was evident before the First World War<sup>2</sup> but in the late empire after 1918, emancipated women in the metropole and colonies were able to take a more pro-active role in imperial politics. A minority of women also became involved in organisations and initiatives critical of empire and the racial orders that supported it.<sup>3</sup> These were influenced by socialism and communism, the growth of anti-colonialism and/ or international feminist networks that developed in tandem with the international peace movement. Feminists in Britain and the Dominions were now interconnected through the British Commonwealth League (BCL), established in 1925 by Australian feminists, in pursuing an agenda of human rights and equal citizenship in international forums.<sup>4</sup>

My focus is mainly on metropolitan based activism but also significant is the growth of white female activism in the white settler colonies, where women were forging identities independent of the metropolitan centre. Organisations like the BCL were establishing their own agendas, including the rights of colonised women. In the case of Kenya and Rhodesia settler women's agendas relating to race, African nationalism, and settler autonomy could conflict with those of metropolitan female activists.<sup>5</sup> Thus local initiatives in the empire, particularly in the white settler colonies, were part of vertical networks of power linking colony and metropole but

horizontal, transnational networks also interconnected colonies with each other, the metropolitan centre, and with international organisations. British women's activism was embedded in these networks of empire, but also, increasingly, had a wider international dimension as more women from the metropole and the Dominions participated in international forums.<sup>6</sup>

Thus white women's activism went beyond the pre-war philanthropic imperial feminist initiatives critiqued by historians who have highlighted the relationships between 'maternalist' campaigns for emancipation in Britain, empire activism, and racial supremacy.<sup>7</sup> With the exception of such studies, most research into gender and empire has focused on white women's role in the colonies in strengthening the race and gender orders that sustained colonial rule. Migration and experiences of settler women before the Second World War have also received attention.<sup>8</sup> Few academic works address women's imperial activism in the metropolitan context, particularly after 1918, and, as Clare Midgley has stressed, this remains a relatively neglected area.<sup>9</sup> Here I am interpreting 'activism' as all activities which engaged with, or influenced, imperial policies, either in defence of empire, or critical of European colonialism and the racial exclusions which it promoted. The nature of women's political activism and their attitudes to race and empire was not uniform but mediated by class (with middle and upper class women constituting the activists, in the main), political affiliation (conservative, liberal or left-wing) and age (older women tended to be more conservative and patronising towards the colonised than the younger generation). Also influential were developments in imperial discourse and practice with a greater emphasis on colonial development as decolonisation approached. Additionally, women's activism was informed by the new liberal humanitarian agenda of the League of Nations that placed more emphasis on the

welfare of the colonised peoples, an agenda that was much expanded by the post 1945 United Nations.

This article, then, assesses and critiques the extent to which empire activism was 'feminised' after 1918. By 'feminised' I refer to the wider participation of women in imperial politics but also the increased influence of 'female' values of compassion and concern for the welfare of the colonised. 'Feminisation' of imperial discourse and practice was reflected in greater emphasis on colonial reforms and development and the wider significance of gender in colonial policy and practice.<sup>10</sup> This 'feminisation' arguably went beyond the philanthropic maternalist concern for oppressed colonised women of the pre-1914 era in that female influence was more varied and extensive as decolonisation approached. Though masculine eyes, 'feminization' was also associated with the weakening and decline of empire, a loss of masculine vigour. First I trace the important developments spanning the pre- and post-war period that brought white women more predominantly into imperial politics and highlight key aspects of continuity and change. This is followed by an analysis of the nature of women's activism from the end of the First World War up to decolonisation.

### **Female emancipation and empire activism: continuity and change**

Continuities existed from the pre-1914 era up to decolonisation in elite women's support for the imperial mission and participation in pro- imperial organisations. 'Maternalist' concern for colonised women's welfare persisted. Additionally, some women activists, particularly those involved with white settler colonies, also retained pre-war concepts of hierarchical racial orders and their importance to white prestige and power. However, there were also important changes as the confident imperial expansion of the pre-war period was increasingly undermined by anti-colonialism

and emergent discourses that challenged scientific racism. Female emancipation and the higher profile of an international feminist agenda also had a significant impact on British women's imperial activism. Before 1918, women were denied full citizenship although women were active in female emigration societies and a minority of women were influential in the high echelons of imperial power. Flora Shaw, wife of Frederick (Lord) Lugard, the first Governor of Nigeria, was a *Times* journalist writing on colonial affairs. The Fabian socialist, Beatrice Webb, 'invented' the Coefficients 'a club to discuss the aims and methods of imperial policy' in 1904. Club members included influential male imperialists.<sup>11</sup> Beatrice Webb was arguably one of the few women at the heart of imperial politics, particularly when Sidney Webb (now Lord Passfield) became Colonial Secretary in 1929. The Webbs, were 'Empire Socialists', committed to strengthening the empire through reforms.<sup>12</sup> Both Flora Shaw and Beatrice Webb were great admirers of the politician and leading imperialist before 1914, Joseph Chamberlain. Other imperial 'groupies' were attracted to powerful male imperialists; for instance the liberal imperialist, Violet Markham and Violet Cecil, wife of Lord Edward Cecil, who subsequently married Alfred [Lord] Milner, High Commissioner of South Africa at the time of the South African [Boer] War and Colonial Secretary, 1919 to 1921. As Riedi points such influential elite women rejected a 'feminised' imperialism based on social welfare in favour of a 'masculine' model of empire informed by imperial Conservatism.<sup>13</sup>

Female interventions into the masculine world of imperial politics provoked strong criticism. In 1902 Arnold White who was concerned with growing threats to empire and Britain's economy, complained that the War Office, hub of imperial defence, was 'largely under the control of women' and warned that such 'petticoat influence' was 'pernicious to the nation'.<sup>14</sup> Such prejudices persisted after 1918 but

enfranchisement of women over 30, combined with women's contribution to the war effort, including the defence of empire, and broader social and cultural changes catalysed by the war, forced men to take women's contribution to the continued health of empire more seriously. In 1919, at the Jubilee dinner of the Royal Colonial Institute (RCI), as President, the Duke of Connaught, spoke of the 'present shortcomings' of the organisation, including the fact that although 'Lady Associates' who their own meetings were still excluded from full membership.<sup>15</sup>

Emancipation reconfigured British women's relationship to Empire and imperial politics and women became more pro-active in such organisations and other forms of activism on more equal terms. The 1919 Sex Disqualification Removal Act opened 'male' professions to women and more women benefitted from a university education.<sup>16</sup> After 1928 all women over 21 were full 'empire citizens', a concept which became central to evolving conceptions of a modern empire. Empowered by citizenship, women in Britain and its white dominions, could now assume a higher profile which men had to now accept, if reluctantly. At the same time, the post-war years also witnessed a perceived crisis in masculinity and related 'feminisation' of British society. Sir Ralph Furse, head of recruitment at the Colonial office, complained of the 'hollow men' of the 'straw generation' who lacked the qualities needed to run the empire. Isak Dinesen (Karen Blixen), the Danish author and Kenyan settler, spoke of the purposelessness of young men, particularly the disillusioned elite. Physical strength no longer defined masculinity in opposition to femininity, she argued, and men had lost their prestige as women moved more pronouncedly into the male sphere.<sup>17</sup>

In addition to female emancipation, education and entitlement to full citizenship rights, the discourse of empire changed with the emergent concept of

commonwealth. The ideal of a new, domesticated empire, an 'empire family' was promoted to strengthen the empire as threats mounted from anti-colonial nationalism, international communism and left-wing critics 'at home'. This presaged the transition from empire to commonwealth and the end of Britain's formal empire.<sup>18</sup> The white settler empire, or dominions, the kernel of this emergent commonwealth, was central to this vision and migration was encouraged to build and strengthen these 'mini' Britain's. There was also more recognition of the need to create a modern empire through colonial development. British women contributed to attaining this vision in four distinct and different ways. Firstly, in pro-empire organisations dedicated to empire strengthening; secondly, in promoting female migration; thirdly, as defenders and critics of empire and, finally, in helping to implement the development agenda in the colonies. Through these activities British women arguably made a positive contribution to the evolution of a modern, 'progressive' imperial policy which was central to imperial management of anti-colonial nationalism during the messy ending of empire.

#### *Pro-empire organisations and the defence of empire*

During the war, women had developed the 'skills and character' which would be 'of immense value... to Empire'<sup>19</sup> and after 1918, male imperialists increasingly recognized women's potential as 'Empire Builders'.<sup>20</sup> New threats to empire, without and within, now stimulated the mobilisation of elite women in the defence of empire and emancipated middle and upper class women had a higher profile in political activism. After the First World War, as Andrew Thompson points out, there was an increase in popular imperial sentiment, a 'participatory' imperialism related to support for the white empire and affinity with white settlers.<sup>21</sup> Visions of a more and inclusive,



domesticated Empire were articulated through popular culture and politics and penetrated the grass roots of British politics. At the Women's Constitutional Association (Grundisburgh and Burgh branch) held on September 5<sup>th</sup> 1925, for instance, 'The Empire Stall' was a 'special feature' and W.A.S Hewins, the Chairman of the Empire Development Union, gave an address.<sup>22</sup> Female empire activism was reinforced by membership of empire families and/ or education at girl's public schools such as Cheltenham Ladies College, sister to Cheltenham, the 'school for empire'. The heads of leading girls' schools were active in imperial networks promoting education. Reta Oldham, head of Streatham Hill High School, London, from 1898-1923, was a leading member of the Association of Headmistresses and set up a sub-committee on openings for educated girls and women in the colonies.<sup>23</sup>

Women's organisations (home and colonial) flourished and demonstrated a patriotic interest in empire and the new agenda of colonial development. The Federation of Women's Institutes in Southern Rhodesia and the East African Women's League (EAWL), founded in 1917 to campaign for equal rights for white women, actively promoted female immigration and had strong links with female dominated pro-empire organizations in Britain and the white Dominions. Such organisations were also involved in welfare work and the 'uplift' of African women.<sup>24</sup> 'Local' organisations like Women's Institutes and the Mother's Union, now had a 'global' perspective on their activities and place in the empire and had colonial branches. The local Rattlesden (Suffolk) branch of the Mother's Union established a Rattlesden Scholarship in 1936 to pay the school fees of a child at Bishop's Girl's School in Accra and encouraged Christian African women to set up branches. The Mother's Union at Accra was set up by a Mrs James Clark on a visit to Accra in 1930 and by 1936 had a membership of 115. It was hoped that the Mother's Union would

'raise the Gold Coast mothers to ... a position of dignity and respect'.<sup>25</sup> This reflected the new emphasis in colonial policy of promoting modern western gender relations to ensure colonial stability.

Patriotic empire organisations now spanned the empire. In Canada the Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire, founded 1900, flourished although attempts to establish empire wide branches brought it into conflict with the influential Victoria League, one of the key empire organizations, founded during the Boer War by Alice Balfour, Violet Cecil, and other pro- imperialist women in 1901.<sup>26</sup> Royal women were also active pro-imperialists and patrons of imperialist organisations. HRH Princess Christian was the first president of the Society for the Oversea Settlement of British Women (SOSWB). When she died in 1923, her daughter, Princess Marie Louise, continued her charitable work for the SOSBW. Both Princesses were patrons of the Victoria League.<sup>27</sup>

The Victoria League, named in honour of Queen Victoria, is arguably the pre-eminent and most influential organisation demonstrating female elite activism. From its inauguration, it was dedicated to 'binding in closer sympathy the scattered peoples of the Empire' and promoting unity. The League was also instrumental in founding the Ladies Empire Club, a meeting-place for women from the British dominions.<sup>28</sup> It had close links with women's organisations such as the Guild of Loyal Women in South Africa and branches were quickly established empire wide. In her seminal study of the early years of the League, Eliza Riedi argued that prominent women faded out of the organisation after the First World War and more men joined.<sup>29</sup> However, whilst it was not exclusively a woman's organisation, women predominated in the administration and the activities of the League. The

President from 1901 to 1927 was the Dowager Countess of Jersey, the Honorary Treasurer, and Mrs. Maurice Macmillan and patrons included the King and Queen and eminent men such as Rudyard Kipling and Sydney Webb. The Victoria League House at 38 Chesham House, Belgrave Square, London, became a 'centre of empire hospitality' with a fully licenced restaurant and snack bar and reception rooms to entertain 'friends'.<sup>30</sup>

During the interwar years, in addition to its educational and hospitality brief, a key area of the League's work was supporting colonial students, whose numbers expanded in recognition of the need for more educated colonial subjects to develop colonies on modern lines. By 1938, it was heavily involved in the 'supervision and guidance' of colonial students in the UK and established a hostel for them in Bayswater. In 1939, on the instigation of the Colonial Office, the League was asked to take over care of colonial students and established Colonial Students' Committees that had links with student committees in Africa and the Caribbean. From late 1943 the Victoria League Colonial Bureau consolidated work with colonial students.<sup>31</sup> Most of these students were male but during and after the war, the League also supported a minority of young women from the colonies. In 1942, a group of women who had travelled from Jamaica to find war work received hospitality from League members who arranged hostel accommodation in London for them. In 1944, on the request of the CO, the League established a residential Club for Colonial Girls in London, officially opened by the Duke of Devonshire in 1945, that would act as a reception centre for new arrivals-students and service women.<sup>32</sup>

The wartime activities of the League arguably reflected seminal developments in colonial policy to address the twin, and potentially conflicting, challenges of the growth

of colonial unrest and related race consciousness, and the need to secure the support of the empire for the war effort. A new official discourse of multiracialism and commonwealth citizenship emerged. There was greater recognition of the need to expand the educated colonial elites as self-government moved higher up the agenda, hence the Victoria League's work with colonial students. In 1941 Sir Thomas Drummond Shiels described the League as 'very human and enlightened Empire organisation and a staunch advocate of the Commonwealth family'.<sup>33</sup> In recognition perhaps of the need to strengthen bonds across the empire, the League was also now affiliated to Imperial order Daughters of the Empire National Chapter of Canada and continued to provide general hospitality for visitors and military personnel from the empire. In 1941 a Victoria League Club for Service Men from Overseas was established in Malet Street, London administered by the League's Secretary (from 1918), Gertrude Drayton. Initially most of these were from the 'white' dominions although by 1942 the club was reportedly was taking men from all parts of the empire' including the West Indies and India. From 1944 short wave length broadcasts from London began to promote the work of the League for servicemen from the Dominions and Colonies.<sup>34</sup> In 1941 Gertrude Drayton was killed with several others when the club was bombed but a new location was quickly found. Drayton had also been Secretary of the London-based Joint Standing Committee for Educational work of the Non-political Empire Societies and Drummond Shiels, who chaired the Committee, recalled that she had been 'especially successful in building up collaboration with the [Colonial Office]'. A Memorial Fund was set up to fund a Dominions student hostel which had reached £3,434 when it was closed in May 1950.<sup>35</sup>

After the war, the League, together with organisations such as the English Speaking Union and the British Council, focused on promoting the British

Commonwealth and British culture in a new world of decolonisation, cold war politics and American global dominance. With branches in London, Edinburgh and Oxford, the League was now represented throughout the white dominions and the 'Colonial Empire', including Malaya and Hong Kong. The president was Princess Alice, Countess of Athlone, who also became the first Chancellor of the new University College of the West Indies in Jamaica in 1950; Mary, Duchess of Devonshire was deputy president. A 'Young Contingent' (18-30) devoted to 'social gatherings' was established during the war; Princess Margaret was president and by the 1950s the Contingent had 10,000 members worldwide. The League thus remained committed to promoting and strengthening 'family and friendship within the Commonwealth and Empire'. The clear objective was defence of empire in the era of decolonisation and public indifference to empire in Britain. Hence the promotion of the 'family concept' in publicity literature; families 'supported each other' and 'a family whose members did not do these things would be a family that was breaking up'.<sup>36</sup> In response to a debate in the House of Lords in 1945 that had identified a lack of interest in empire, the League also engaged in public events to promote this 'empire family' and in 1949 gave 31 lectures on empire matters to the Women's Institutes, Wives Fellowships, student associations, schools and Townswomen's Guilds.<sup>37</sup>

In 1950 the League received £10,000 from an anonymous donor and in 1951, when the organisation celebrated its 'Golden Jubilee', the *Victoria League Review* (formerly *Monthly Notes*) became *Welcome: the Official Journal of the Victoria League*, a bi-monthly publication that included 'shopping consultants' and 'expert travel advice'. This adopted a much larger magazine format containing adverts for the first time. These transformations in the ethos and mission of the Victoria League

reflect the waning fortunes of empire and attempts on behalf of the organisation to modernise and adapt to the times. The name was changed in the 1950s to Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship, a non-religious, non-political, world-wide, charitable organization that supported the Commonwealth and provided hospitality for international students and wives and families of overseas visitors. Local and global links were retained with branches in Britain and the empire and youth branches were encouraged to ensure the continuing vigour of the organisation. The National Committee in Australia only ceased to exist in 1998 and the London branch, with the Queen as patron, is still in existence, now based on Leinster Square, London with a brief to promote 'friendship and hospitality across Commonwealth nations'. The League still runs its hostel in Bayswater, now self-catering student accommodation for international students.<sup>38</sup>

After 1918, elite pro-imperialist women also worked closely with powerful male imperialists in the Royal Colonial Institute, which became the Royal Empire Society (RES) in 1929 and the Royal Commonwealth Society (RCS) in 1958, reflecting changing concepts of empire.<sup>39</sup> Women members were particularly active on the Imperial Studies Committee and in local branches of the RES. Mrs. Hugo Harper was the warden of Harper House, headquarters of the Cambridge branch of the RES, which was dedicated to promoting 'Empire Studies' in schools and universities in Britain and the Empire. She also convened the annual RES Empire Cambridge Conferences from 1936. The third annual conference in 1938 addressed threats to empire and was attended by a female delegate from the Victoria League. Black delegates also attended, reflecting the need to co-opt the educated moderates in defence of empire as threats mounted.<sup>40</sup>

A survey of *United Empire*, the journal of the Royal Colonial Institute, for the inter-war years indicates that more generally women helped to organise conferences, engaged in public speaking, contributed to educational schemes to promote empire and acted as the hostesses and social facilitators in imperial 'salons'. Violet Milner, although she eschewed organised female activism, continued to promote the imperial views of her deceased husband, publishing his political documents and, like Flora Shaw (Lady Lugard), contributing to contemporary debates about imperialism through journalism.<sup>41</sup> Female social networks were facilitated by membership of the Ladies Empire Club in Governor Square. Elite pro-imperialist women represent greater continuity with the pre-1914 era. They remained the staunchest defenders of superior anglosaxonism rooted in Cecil Rhodes' vision of creating an 'anglosaxon' world united by a common, and superior, culture, language and whiteness spanning the globe and including the USA. Such women were thus also prominent in organisations which promoted female emigration.

### **Women as 'Empire Builders'; promoting white settlement**

Migration to the white empire was established as a key priority during the First World War.<sup>42</sup> Emigration was a solution to the post-war 'excess of females' and a policy of definite control and supervision of emigration by the imperial Government was advocated to forestall emigration of 'able-bodied men'.<sup>43</sup> A Government Emigration Committee, set up in 1918 and located in the Colonial Office, recommended the appointment of four special interviewing staff, two of which should be women.<sup>44</sup> Colonial Office control was ensured in 1919 when existing voluntary female emigration societies were collapsed into the Society for Oversea Settlement of British Women (SOSBW), a new 'central and advisory body' for voluntary

organizations involved with female migration. From 1920 this quasi-governmental organization of 'responsible women' with 'first-hand experience of ... empire migration' was recognized as the women's branch of the Oversea Settlement Committee.<sup>45</sup>

The agenda of the SOSBW demonstrates how class differences between women influenced the nature of their participation in empire as potential settler wives, worker emigrants, or elite activists with influential connexions in imperial circles. For elite and middle-class female activists the moral protection of working-class female migrants was a priority and the Government issued a pamphlet which advised women not go out to colonies alone but 'in parties in charge of a matron' (continuing the policy of chaperoning begun before the war). They were also urged to secure introductions through reputable organizations like the Victoria League whose London-based Settler's Welcome Committee would provide emigrants who had good references with 'letters of introduction to corresponding committees in the Dominions'.<sup>46</sup> Concern for the moral probity of female migrants reflects the extent to which white women were central to upholding the vital race borders central to imperial visions of building a strong white empire. Jean P. Smith, one of the few historians to research female empire migration beyond the 1930s, has stressed how the need to support racial prestige provided continuity of purpose of the SOSBW throughout its history.<sup>47</sup> Female migration was thus vigorously promoted; Gladys Potts, chairman of the SOSBW Executive Committee until 1936 when she became vice-president, claimed that 'the destinies of race and empire lay in women's hands'. An article in *United Empire* claimed that women's business was to 'get their house in order, to domesticate the heart of the wild', particularly the newer settler colonies as they were 'directly responsible' for colonial stability.<sup>48</sup>



Until its collapse in 1963, the SOSBW received an annual government grant, worked closely with home and colonial governments, and provided paid posts and good career opportunities for educated women, with plenty of subsidized overseas travel. Through its elite patrons and executive the SOSBW was able to forge powerful links between with women settler's organisations and establish colonial branches. The organisation was particularly active in addressing the demand for professional emigrants, nurses, teachers, secretaries and governesses in the expanding settler colonies of Southern Rhodesia and Kenya. The leading light in the SOSWB Rhodesia Committee was Mrs Geoffrey Dawson, wife of the editor of *The Times* and the daughter of an imperial administrator, Sir Arthur Lawley. By 1928, the Catholic Women's League, the Church Army, the National Council of Women, the Girl Guides, the Mothers' Union, the Girl's Friendly Society, and the YWCA had representatives on the SOSBW.<sup>49</sup>

Most studies of female emigration deal with the earlier period. At the end of the Second World War, however, 'Commonwealth Migration and Settlement' was still very much on the government agenda, debated in parliament and covered in the press and BBC.<sup>50</sup> The SOSWB's main brief now was to provide an advisory and placement service for 'teachers, graduates and ...highly qualified nurses', primarily for the white settler colonies. In the non-settler colonies, recruitment of staff for schools, hospitals and government posts was the responsibility of the Colonial Office.<sup>51</sup> In keeping with the new official discourse on welfare and development, the organisation toned down its discourse of racial supremacy and demonstrated more interest in 'African welfare work'. As with other similar organisation allusions to 'empire' were supplanted by the supposedly more inclusive and egalitarian 'commonwealth'. In the early 1950s, Ellen Cumber, the paid director, spoke at

meetings organised by the SOSBW regional representatives in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Liverpool, Manchester and Sheffield. She also went on promotional tours in Canada, Australia, Kenya, the new Central African Federation (Southern and Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland) and South Africa. In Kenya during the Mau Mau insurgency, she visited a centre for African children; a training centre for Kikuyu women, an African woman's club and the Kamiti detention camp and reported that the Society was concerned 'with the recruitment of women for all those institutions'.<sup>52</sup>

The coronation of Elizabeth II, 'added a deep feeling of kinship [between] all...members of the Commonwealth' and a 'fresh vision' for pro-imperialist organisations such as the SOSBW, represented at the ceremony by the Chairman of the Executive Committee. The organisation now acted as the 'woman's branch' of the migration section of the Commonwealth Relations Office.<sup>53</sup> The SOSBW continued its close involvement with the Victoria League, the British Council, the British Federation of University Women and the Ministry of Labour. Other women's organisations such as the Nyasaland Council of Women and the Ugandan Council of Women were now represented on the SOSBW council. Royal donations ended in 1954 and the organisation became more dependent on private companies and banks with vested interests in empire, such as the African Investment Trust Ltd, P&O, and other shipping lines.<sup>54</sup> The society was renamed the Women's Migration & Overseas Appointments Society in 1962 but soon folded when decolonisation accelerated and attention was refocused on the 'empire within' as migration from the now independent ex-colonial territories increased.

**Female activism and agency in the evolution of late imperial policy and practice**

In addition to female activism in pro-imperial organisations, British women also contributed to developments in imperial policy and practice in three major areas: in campaigning for colonial reforms, in contributing to the evolution of colonial development discourse and responses to the challenges of nationalism, and in the implementation of evolving colonial policies. Andrew Thompson has observed that the 'imperial mobility' of the professional middle classes, increased considerably in the first half of the twentieth century and influenced their perceptions of Empire.<sup>55</sup> As academics, members of parliament, journalists and writers women had greater opportunities to travel and work in the empire and to make an active contribution to imperial politics. This contribution included women who were critical, as well as supportive of the imperial mission. The relationship of such educated and mainly middle-class 'modern' women to empire was more diverse and nuanced than that of elite women's activities and reflected new forms of activism rather than continuity with the past. Women were breaching gender barriers and beginning to make their mark on colonial policy making, anthropological studies, and critical analyses of empire.

Firstly, I consider campaigns for colonial reforms in the metropolitan heartland where women now had a voice in parliament and more opportunities to mix with black and Asian colonial activists and students. As MPs, women sat on parliamentary committees and actively initiated campaigns. Ellen Wilkinson (Labour) and Eleanor Rathbone (Independent), an active feminist and humanitarian before 1914, raised questions critical of colonial policy. Rathbone, and Edith Picton-Turbervill (Labour, elected 1929), who had spent time as a teacher and missionary in India, were key activists between 1934 and 1939 in a successful campaign to lobby the government to end the practice of *mui tsai* (little sister), the indentureship of poor

girls and young women as prostitutes and domestics in Hong Kong.<sup>56</sup> Rathbone also took up the maternalist cause of oppressed Indian women, including publishing *Child Marriage: the Indian Minotaur* (1934), and became a supporter of constitutional reform in India. She also called for action to prevent forced marriage in colonial Africa.<sup>57</sup> The socialist Wilkinson was a supporter of Indian nationalism and visited India with another pro-India activist, Monica Whately, in December 1936 and again in the 1940s, with Krishna Menon, on the invitation of the India League. They investigated conditions in Indian jails and presented a report on the repressive measures of the Indian government.<sup>58</sup>

After 1930, argues Susan Pedersen, an 'imperialist feminist programme' centred on the welfare of women and children in the colonies began to make an impact.<sup>59</sup> These humanitarian campaigns engaged women who remained committed to the empire but believed in the need for reform. A prime example is the Duchess of Atholl, elected in 1923 as Conservative MP for Kinross and West Perthshire and vice president of the British Empire Union. Atholl was an advocate of strengthening British power in India and strong opponent of the Government of India Act in 1935. But she also championed the cause of oppressed colonised women and with Rathbone formed an all-party Committee for the Protection of Coloured Women in the Crown Colonies. She was also a leading light in the campaign against the practice of clitoridectomy (female circumcision) in Kenya, which the colonial authorities opposed on the grounds that it could further antagonise male nationalists who wished to defend traditional culture.<sup>60</sup>

Such political campaigns represent some continuity with the pre-war maternalism of the imperial feminists but within a different context of female

representation in Parliament and the rise of anti-colonial nationalism. International and empire-wide developments during the late imperial era also resulted in new forms of female activism. Certain educated, middle-class women, liberal and socialist, influenced by the traumas of the war its global aftermath, embraced 'progressive' ideas on race and the need for colonial reform, and/or progress to independence. As activists in new anti-imperialist pressure groups and social facilitators and hosts of interracial events and multi-racial 'salons' they arguably demonstrated more empathy and understanding for the colonial oppressed than did their male counterparts. The suffragette, Sylvia Pankhurst, joined the Communist Party and became an ardent anti-imperialist and champion of the Ethiopian cause after the Italian invasion in 1935.<sup>61</sup> The writer, Ethel Mannin, supported Indian independence and was active in the Friends of India pressure group. Mannin published a record of her trip to India on the cusp of independence and was highly critical of Britain's imperial legacy of poverty, lack of education, 'corrupt, toadying officials' and the 'mass subservience of a subject race'.<sup>62</sup> The novelist, Winifred Holtby, was instrumental in setting up the 'Friends of Africa' pressure group to support black South African trade unionists in their struggles against segregationist policies.<sup>63</sup> Such women brought more critical perspective on race and imperial issues to the political agenda of the 'chattering classes' of the 1930s. Female critics of empire also included women who were 'inside' the imperial elites.<sup>64</sup>

A minority of educated, emancipated women who demonstrated sympathy for black and Asian anti-colonial nationalists were regarded as a danger to empire, particularly where the breaching of racial borders was concerned. As the 'colonial frontier' moved into in Britain so did the sexual threat of colonised men.<sup>65</sup> During and after the Second World War, younger women were more openly supportive of African

nationalism and there were some high profile liaisons that elicited public opprobrium: the marriages of Peggy Cripps, daughter of the Labour minister, Stafford Cripps to the Ghanaian lawyer, Joseph Appiah, and Ruth Williams, a white clerk, to Seretse Khama, hereditary king of Bechuanaland. Before her marriage, observes Jordanna Bailkin, Peggy Cripps was one of the first members of the World Assembly of Youth (WAY), an organisation established in 1948 on the initiative of the labour Foreign Secretary, Ernest Bevin, to counteract the activities of the Soviet World Federation of Democratic Youth. WAY, adds Bailkin, was committed to 'interracial respect' and Peggy Cripps was reputedly an 'energetic worker for racial unity' in London.<sup>66</sup>

Progressive colonial policies and race relations initiatives such as the interracial League of Coloured Peoples (founded 1931) were also supported by pro-imperialist women such as Dame Katherine Furse, who made her mark on empire as chief Girl Guide and Director of the World Association of Girls Guides and Boy Scouts, and the academic Margery Perham.<sup>67</sup> Perham sympathised with the grievances of the (mostly male) colonial elite and made a plea for the recognition of educated Africans as anti-colonial nationalism gathered pace in the 1930s. Having 'made contact, even friends with a few Africans in Africa and England', she concluded that 'despite racial and cultural differences' educated Africans shared 'our common nature'.<sup>68</sup> The Kenyan settler, Nellie Grant, mother of Elspeth Huxley, acidly commented on Perham's 'pet boys' in the 1940s, including the Kenyan nationalist, Tom Mboya.<sup>69</sup> Elspeth Huxley made a noted contribution to discourses evolving around the end of empire through evoking settler (and empire) nostalgia in her autobiography, *The Flame Trees of Thika: Memories of an African Childhood* (1959), and publishing works on commonwealth migration into Britain and problems of administration in West Africa.<sup>70</sup> These responses reflect deepening divisions between settler women

defending their way of life which was threatened by nationalism and multiracialism and progressive metropolitans such as Perham.

From the interwar years, then, women arguably began to make a bigger mark on the shifting imperial agenda. Margery Perham, Britain's 'conscience on Africa' with her influential connexions, began to have more of a direct influence on colonial policies as a progressive imperialist.<sup>71</sup> Responding to a shift in government policy that became more noticeable during and after the Second World War, she stressed the need for the British empire 'to rise to her changing tasks' and express itself 'less in power than in service'.<sup>72</sup> This implies a shift from the masculine to a more 'feminine' concept of imperial mission. As academics, Perham, the anthropologists Lucy Mair, Audrey Richards and Margaret Read, and the educationist Margaret Wrong, the Canadian born secretary of the International Committee on Christian Literature for Africa, contributed to the emergent colonial development discourse. Socialist women, particularly those associated with the Fabian Colonial Bureau such as Rita Hinden, published critical analyses advocating colonial reforms. Vera Anstey (1889-1952), a lecturer in commerce at London University became the 'standard British authority' on Indian economics and development, *The Economic Development of India* (1929) was still in publication in its 4<sup>th</sup> edition in 1952.<sup>73</sup> During the inter-war years, women also broke into academia in the white settler colonies as well as in the metropole becoming part of the intellectual networks that spanned Britain's white empire. Such women, argues Kate Pickles, rather than question colonialism and empire, supported it and were firmly embedded in the imperial discourses of the era.<sup>74</sup> This is also true of eminent academics such as Margery Perham, although the appraisal of anthropologists is more ambivalent.

The anthropologist and author, Audrey Richards, was instrumental in establishing the Colonial Social Science Research Council (CSSRC) in 1944. The

CSSRC was regarded as central to implementing new policies of colonial development and welfare to hold on the colonies when empire was threatened by American and Soviet global interests and mass nationalist movements. From 1940-46 Richards was at the Colonial Office as Secretary to the newly formed Colonial Research Council and, from 1943 to 1946, as a member of the Colonial Office's Social Welfare Advisory Committee. In a memorandum she drew attention to flaws in the CO's planning in relation to research in the colonies and recommended the establishment of a Social Research Council.<sup>75</sup> The CSSRC was a reflection of official acknowledgement of the value of the social sciences in addressing 'human factors' and problems related to social and economic change and the need to control nationalism and flows of knowledge to the colonies in the new Cold War climate.<sup>76</sup> As the social sciences and social welfare, which was associated more closely with women, were given more priority in colonial development more women participated in CSSRC, as committee members and received funding as Colonial Research Fellows.

Richards was a daughter of empire (her father was Sir Henry Erle Richards a legal member of the Vice- Regal Council of India). She was well-connected in official circles, through her friendship with Ruth Cohen, principal of Newnham College, Cambridge, and sister of Andrew Cohen, who was in the Colonial Office during the war and subsequently became Governor of Uganda. She never challenged the idea of empire *per se* but, as an anthropologist, was committed to its modernisation in order to defend British influence, particularly when decolonisation became inevitable. As the head of the influential East African Institute of Social and Economic Research (EAISER) at Makerere College, Uganda, from 1950 to 1956 she became closely involved with research related to the managing the transition to independence whilst



retaining British influence.<sup>77</sup> Richards, together with other academics including Mair and the historians Sally Chilver, the CSSRC Secretary from 1952 to 1956, and Lillian Penson made a positive contribution to the development of colonial and African studies in British Universities.<sup>78</sup>

Richards was particularly concerned about American intrusions into African studies as a threat to British influence as independence loomed. If African studies were neglected, she feared that research would become dominated by 'unqualified Americans and Russians'.<sup>79</sup> In this sense Richards was an empire patriot concerned about threats to the reputation, and continued influence, of the British in colonial Africa. After the Suez crisis when support for the CSSRC dwindled, Richards strongly opposed threats to cuts in funding fearing the greater influence of American researchers in the social sciences, who were 'already arriving in the colonies'. She also warned against 'quarter baked African politicians', who could be in charge of research reflecting perhaps, her own prejudices about African nationalism.<sup>80</sup> Ambivalence to the idea of African independence reflects the fact that Richards was always a part of, rather than a threat to, the imperial establishment. As an anthropologist, she was in an outsider position regarding colonial administrations, yet had insider connexions with colonial officials in the colonies in which she was based. Unlike metropolitan-based female political activists, she had first-hand experience of colonial policy in practice. Here she shared more in common with women involved with the colonial service. What contribution did such women make to implementation of evolving colonial policies?

During the interwar years more women went out to the colonies as wives of colonial officials and as the colonial agenda shifted to welfare and development,

more women were recruited into the colonial service as doctors, teachers and welfare workers to expand the work of missionaries. With the emphasis on development more priority was given to the education of women and girls, predominantly directed to turning out 'modern' wives and mothers and thus domesticating and stabilising colonial societies threatened with disruptive new influences. Women like Margaret Faith Tolfree, the first headmistress of Queen's College School for girls in Yaba, Nigeria, 1927-1930 (as Margaret Wordsworth) and Sara Burstall, head of Manchester School for Girls, helped the CO to recruit women teachers to Africa, an attractive proposition as recruits for the colonies were better paid than in UK.<sup>81</sup> Few women, however, had any influence in the higher ranks of colonial governance before the second world with the exception of Gertrude Lothian Bell (1868-1926), the traveller, archaeologist and Arabist, who played a major role in establishing and helping administer the modern state of Iraq in the early 1920s.<sup>82</sup>

Until the 1930s most white women in the colonies were married to colonial officials and remained within orthodox gender bounds. As in the pre-1914 era the wives of higher officials continued to sponsor voluntary initiatives related to the welfare of the colonized, particularly women and children. However, such women were also increasingly influenced by the changing political climate and took a more pro-active role in the affairs of the colonies in which they resided by helping to promote new policies directed at development and modernisation. One such pro-active modern woman is Molly Huggins, wife of Sir John Huggins, Governor of Jamaica from 1943 to 1951. Molly was a product of empire (her father was in the Malayan Civil Service) and part of the complex networks of empire strengthened by family intermarriages. She described herself as an 'ardent feminist' against 'any form of colour discrimination', was actively involved in promoting welfare schemes in

Jamaica, and took a 'great interest in the politics of the island'.<sup>83</sup> A leading light in the Jamaica Federation of Women she was the inspiration behind a controversial 'mass wedding' campaign directed at reducing common law marriages and illegitimacy regarded by colonial modernisers as a barrier to progress. These campaigns, however, had little success.<sup>84</sup> Her interventions may be interpreted as a form of white female cultural imperialism resented by poorer African Jamaicans. Molly, however, regarded herself as a progressive and stabilizing influence on Jamaican society as nationalism intensified, a spokeswoman for the benefits of a modern empire.

British women in the service of empire were represented by the Corona Society, a support network fanning out from the Colonial Office. The Corona Club, founded in 1900 for all past and present members of government service in the overseas territories, was men only until 1937 when the Women's Corona Club was founded for wives and widows of colonial officers. In 1950 the Women's Corona Society (WCS) was established with a base at the Colonial Office. Membership in the 1950s included more women employed by the Colonial Office in London and abroad in the Colonial Service as teachers, nurses, doctors and social workers; governors' or consul generals' wives were patrons of local branches. The society, now multiracial, still exists today for those who 'are living or who have lived' abroad and provides 'advice, guidance and friendship'.<sup>85</sup> What role did the organisation play in sustaining the empire as it morphed into commonwealth? The WCS was keen to transform its image as a purely social organisation and became more Commonwealth focused with wider interests. The society ran training courses and gave advice to Colonial Service Officers' wives and in 1953 requested Development and Welfare funding from the Colonial Office 'to encourage and support voluntary

social work in the colonies'. Officials queried the wisdom of giving money to the WCS but acknowledged that it could play an important role in ensuring 'the [appropriate] behaviour of European women abroad' essential to the 'morale' of the Colonial Service. Finally a small grant was allocated.<sup>86</sup> The WCS continued to receive support from the Colonial Office, including free accommodation through to the 1960s when it was keen to divest itself of its former 'colonial image'.<sup>87</sup> Publicity material now emphasised that the WCS was 'a circle of women of many races who...work for an increase in mutual understanding and friendship'.<sup>88</sup> Official recognition that the WCS did useful work reflected a grudging acceptance of the 'feminization' of the colonial practice and the importance of gender in the process of decolonisation.

### **The feminisation or ruin of empire?**

There is much debate about the nature of empire in the period covered in this article and the extent to which it influenced imperial consciousness at home but, as Andrew Thompson has stressed that, even in the era of decolonisation, the empire arguably remained 'as much a symbolic as a substantive force' in British public life.<sup>89</sup> In an era of rapid change, pro- imperialist women activists strove to keep the idea of empire alive and were strong defenders of a united empire based on Anglosaxon supremacy. However, when independence seemed inevitable, pro-imperialist women's organisations had to re-orient their activities towards ensuring a smooth transition to a commonwealth of nations where British influence still prevailed. In the penultimate years of empire other women activists also helped to shape policy reforms and made a notable contribution as academics, political campaigners and critics of colonialism to the evolution of colonial policy. Women activists were

engaged in empire strengthening but were also some of the most ardent critics of empire and the racial inequalities upon which it was premised.

To return then to the key theme, then, did women have a 'feminising' influence on imperial politics and practice? And did this relate to stronger influence of supposed feminine characteristics of compassion and concern for human welfare? There is some evidence that gender did influence interpersonal relations with the colonised. Gertrude Bell allegedly was 'one of the few [Government] representatives remembered by the Arabs with anything resembling affection'. African members of a Gold Coast delegation to England in 1934 to publicise colonial grievances made a clear distinction between the attitudes of English men and women and praised the 'sympathy, kindness and assistance' of Englishwomen as 'landladies and organisers'.<sup>90</sup> More British women were actively involved in developing and delivering this colonial welfare agenda but the new discourse of welfare and development also challenged the hyper masculinity that informed imperial power relations before 1914. Confident imperial masculinities were undermined by the dual challenge of colonial male nationalists and the intrusion of emancipated British women into former male preserves. Formerly, men claimed that white women in the colonies disrupted the masculine imperial mission. The male establishment now targeted women in the metropolitan centre, particularly female socialist and feminist critics of empire and those who entered into interracial relationships, as the prime threats to empire.

Masculine fears of 'petticoat rule' by women also persisted. Colonial officials complained of the 'disproportionate number of women experts' and 'abstention of masculine intellect' apparent until the Second World War.<sup>91</sup> Similar prejudices surfaced with the feminization of the Colonial Service as more women entered into

the educational and medical branches of the Service after 1918. Yet masculine anxieties about 'feminisation' masked continued male dominance in imperial administration. According to Audrey Richards, Margery Perham, 'very much wanted to be a woman governor'.<sup>92</sup> Non-the-less she had to content herself with the aura of power from the male administrators she admired. More women were admitted into the Colonial Service during the Second World War and after but they were still kept to the lower ranks and professional opportunities for women were limited and clearly gendered.<sup>93</sup> Women academics in colonial and African studies also continued to face discrimination from male colleagues; leading male anthropologists resented competition from women, regarded the intrusion of women into fieldwork as 'undesirable,' and believed they should stick to 'welfare work'.<sup>94</sup>

If the high circles of imperial administration and academia remained largely a male preserve, in the broader context of colonial policy and practice British women's activism, female emancipation, and transnational white feminist initiatives did arguably contribute to a 'feminisation' of empire. At the fringes, the unflagging commitment of individual women arguably placed race and imperial issues more firmly on the political agenda in Britain. Colonial visitors were supported by liberal and left-wing women who made a key contribution to the development of anti-colonial politics in Britain and multiculturalism. In this sense they were in the vanguard of transition to the postcolonial era. But pro-imperialist women were also influenced by changing times and embraced progressive ideas on race and colonial policy. Whilst staunchly defending empire they also acknowledged the need for changing agendas, particularly younger women. Thus, whilst there were threads of continuity between pre- and post-war female activism, female emancipation and social and political change precipitated by the two world wars tightened and

expanded networks of female activism across the empire and facilitated new forms of political engagement and a higher profile for women in the imperial agenda.

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## Notes and References

<sup>1</sup> As explored in Claudia Knapman (1986) *White Women in Fiji, 1835-1930: The Ruin of Empire?* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press).

<sup>2</sup> See Julia Bush (1999) *Edwardian Ladies and Imperial Power* (Leicester: Leicester University Press).

<sup>3</sup> See Barbara Bush (1998) 'Britain's conscience on Africa': white women, race and imperial politics in inter-war Britain, in Clare Midgley (Ed) *Gender and Imperialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 200-223.

<sup>4</sup> For instance, Angela Woollacott (2001) *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 107-114; Fiona Paisley (1998) Citizens of the World: Australian Feminism and Indigenous Rights in the International Context, 1920s and 1930s, *Feminist Review*, 58 (1), pp. 66-84.

<sup>5</sup> These conflicts are articulated in letters exchanged between Elspeth Huxley (articulating the Kenyan settler case) and Margery Perham (supporting the rights of Africans in keeping with the agenda of the imperial government). See Elspeth Huxley & Margery Perham (1944) *Race and Politics in Kenya* (London: Faber and Faber). Conflicting interests between colony and metropole are also explored in Donal Lowry (1997) 'White Women's Country', Ethel Tawse Jollie and the Making of White Rhodesia', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 23 (2), pp. 259-281.

<sup>6</sup> See Carol Miller (1944) 'Geneva-the Key to Equality': Inter-war Feminists and the League of Nations, *Women's History Review*, 3, pp. 219-245; Angela Woollacott, (2010) 'Inventing Commonwealth and Pan-Pacific Feminisms: Australian women's internationalist activism in the 1920s-30s', in Karen Offen (Ed.) *Globalizing Feminisms 1789-1945* (London and New York: Routledge), pp. 217-231.

<sup>7</sup> For instance, Antoinette Burton (1994) *Burdens of History: British Feminists, Indian Women and Imperial Culture, 1865-1914* (Durham, North Carolina); Clare Midgley (2007) *Feminism and Empire* (London: Routledge).

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<sup>8</sup> For key areas of research relating to gender and empire see Philippa Levine (Ed) (2004) *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press) and for female migration. Studies of female emigration include Brian L. Blakeley (1988) 'The Society for Oversea Settlement of British Women and the Problems of Empire Settlement, 1917-1936' *Albion; A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies* 20 (3), pp.421- 44; Lisa Chilton (2007) *Agents of Empire: British Female Migration to Canada and Australia, 1860s-1930* (Toronto, University of Toronto Press).

<sup>9</sup> Clare Midgley (2006) 'Bringing Home the Empire: women activists in imperial Britain, 1790s-1930s', in Catherine Hall and Sonya O. Rose (Eds), *At Home with the Empire: metropolitan culture and the imperial world* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), p. 250.

<sup>10</sup> See Barbara Bush (2014) *Motherhood, Morality and Social Order: Gender and Development Discourse and Practice in Late Colonial Africa* in (Eds) Joseph M. Hodge, Gerald Hodl and Martina Kopf *Developing Africa: Concepts and Practices in Twentieth-Century Colonialism* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp.270-293.

<sup>11</sup> Diary dated January, 1904. Archive, W. A. S. Hewins: General Correspondence and Papers, University of Sheffield (SU Archives), Official Papers, Hewins MSS, Box 106, in Section 148, File 198-250, 23.7. William Albert Samuel Hewins (1865-1931), a member of the Coefficients, was an economist and director of the London School of Economics (1895-1903) and Conservative MP from 1912-1918, who became Under Secretary of State for Colonies from 1917 to 1919.

<sup>12</sup> This term is attributed to a pamphlet by Rajani Palme Dutt (1925) *'Empire' Socialism* (London: CPGB).

<sup>13</sup> See Eliza Riedi (2013) *Imperialist Women and Conservative Activism in Early Twentieth Century Britain: The Political World of Violet Milner*, *Women's History Review*, 22 (6), pp. 930-953, p. 931. For a fuller study of this early period see Bush, *Edwardian Ladies*.

<sup>14</sup> Arnold White (1902) *For Efficiency* (Manchester: E Hutton and Co.), p. 85.

<sup>15</sup> Anon (1919) 'The Jubilee Dinner', *United Empire*, 10 (7) , pp. 346-7

<sup>16</sup> Carol Dyehouse (1995) *The British Federation of University Women and the Status of Women in Universities, 1907-1939*, *Women's History Review*, 4 (4) p. 469. See also Susan Kingsley Kent (1994) *Making Peace: The Reconstruction of Gender in Interwar Britain* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press), pp. 114-5.



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<sup>17</sup> Letter to Ingeborg Dinesen, Autumn 1921 and to Bess Westenholz, 23 May, 1926 in (Ed) Frans Lasson (1986) *Isak Dinesen: Letters from Africa, 1914-31* trans. Anne Born (London: Picador), pp. 260-1, 328; Major Sir Ralph Furse (1962) *Aucuparius: Recollections of a Recruiting Officer* (London: Oxford University), pp. 32-3.

<sup>18</sup> For insight into this evolving concept of empire see Lionel Curtis (Ed) (1916) *The Commonwealth of Nations: An enquiry into the nature of citizenship in the British Empire sharing the bond of civilization with the white empire* (London: Macmillan and Company Ltd).

<sup>19</sup> British Women's Emigration Association Annual Report, 1917, p. 9, Archives, Royal Commonwealth Society Collection, Cambridge University Library (RCS), R 11/16.

<sup>20</sup> For instance, Arthur Grimble (1922) *Women as Empire Builders United Empire*, 12 (4), pp.196-7; D. H. Moutray Read (1919) *Women and Empire Consolidation*, *ibid*, 10 (7), pp. 322- 6. See also Memorandum to members of the Economic Defence and Development Committee prepared in the Board of Trade, by A. H. Stanley, 10.8.1918, SU Archives, Hewins Mss, Box 71, Section 105-106/103-159/104.

<sup>21</sup> Andrew S. Thompson (2000) *Imperial Britain: The Empire in British Politics c.1880-1932* (Longman; Harlow, England), pp. 18, 39. 184-9.

<sup>22</sup> Garden Party flyer enclosed in SU Archives Hewins Mss. 88/176. See FN 11 for Hewins' biographical details.

<sup>23</sup> Joyce Goodman & Zoe Milsom (2014) *Performing Reforming and the Category of Age: Empire, Internationalism and Transnationalism in the Career of Reta Oldham, Headmistress, in Tanya Fitzgerald and Elizabeth M. Smyth (Eds) Women Educators, Leaders and Activists: Educational Lives and Networks 1900-1960* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 103.

<sup>24</sup> See Lady Eleanor Cole (1975) *Random Collections of A Pioneer Kenyan Settler* (Baron Publishers; Woodbridge, Suffolk); Winifred Jane Needham (1960) *A history of the Federation of Women's Institutes of Southern Rhodesia* (publisher not identified). Elspeth Huxley, collated material for a 'Pioneers' Scrapbook; *Reminiscences of Kenya, 1890 to 1968*, based on the experiences of EAWL members in Correspondence re televising *The Flame Trees of Thika*, Archives, Huxley Papers, Rhodes House, Box 16, File 1, ff. 26-35; Box 28, File 8. By the 1950s the EAWL had a UK branch and is still in existence (<http://eawl.org/>).

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- <sup>25</sup> Our Fellow Members in Other lands: How they kept the Diamond Jubilee in the Diocese of Accra, *The Mothers Union Journal*, December, 1939, pp. 6-7 and A link between Rattlesden (Suffolk) and Accra: Papers relating to the sponsorship by the Rattlesden Branch of the Mother's Union of a Pupil at Bishop's Girls School, Accra, 1937-39 RCS Archives, RCS-448P4 CUL137.
- <sup>26</sup> Katie Pickles (2002) *Female Imperialism and National Identity: Imperial Order Daughters of the Empire* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 17.
- <sup>27</sup> Princess Marie Louise (1926) *Letters from the Gold Coast* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd), p. 225.
- <sup>28</sup> See also letter from M. E. Jersey, President, *The Spectator*, 19 December, 1903, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/19th-december-1903/14/the-ladies-empire-club>. Accessed, 9 October 2014.
- <sup>29</sup> Eliza Riedi (2002) Women, gender and the promotion of empire: the Victoria League, 1901-1914, *Historical Journal*, 45 (3), pp. 569-599.
- <sup>30</sup> Letter from the Victoria League to Hewing at the CO, 8 June, 1918, SU Archives, Hewins Mss, 99, pp. 72-4.
- <sup>31</sup> *The Victoria League Monthly Notes*, July 1940, no. 363; October, 1943, no.398.
- <sup>32</sup> *Monthly Notes*, Jan. 1947, no. 427; Nov. 1945, no. 413; June/July 1944, no 404; October, 1943, no.398.
- <sup>33</sup> *Monthly Notes*, May 1941, no. 373; Jan 1940, no.358. Shiels was a Scottish Labour MP who was under Secretary of State for Colonies from 1929-1931.
- <sup>34</sup> *Monthly Notes*, May 1941, no. 373; October, 1943, no.398; Feb 1945, no, 408.
- <sup>35</sup> *The Victoria League Review*, May 1950, vol. 2, no. 19; *Monthly Notes*, May 1941, no. 373; Drayton's obituary in the *Times*, 32 April, 1941.
- <sup>36</sup> *Victoria League Publicity Leaflet*, c. 1952. The term 'Empire' was arguably now associated with 'a certain old imperialism' (*Monthly Notes*, Feb, 1945, no. 408).

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<sup>37</sup> *The Victoria League Review*, April 1950, vol.2, no. 18, pp. 10-11.

<sup>38</sup> <http://www.victorialeague.co.uk/contact-us>. Accessed 8 September, 2014. The records of Victoria League for Commonwealth Friendship are in the National Library of Australia.

<sup>39</sup> Anon (1919) Jubilee Dinner, 1919, *United Empire*, 10 (1), pp. 36-7.

<sup>40</sup> See Mrs Hugo Harper (1939), 'Disintegrating Problems within the Empire' in Hugo Edward Harper (Ed.), *Empire Problems* ( Report of the Third Cambridge Empire Conference, 28-30 October, 1938 (London; Frederick Muller Ltd.), pp. 3-4, 13, 20-21.

Harper House was founded in 1919 in the memory of Major Hugo Alfred Harper killed in action in France. It was intended that Harper House should play the same part in Cambridge as Rhodes House played in Oxford, and it boasted the largest Empire Library after that of the Royal Empire Society, reputedly the largest in the world.

<sup>41</sup> Reidi, 'Imperialist Women', pp.942-5.

<sup>42</sup> For instance, Sir George Eulus Foster *et. al.* (1917) *The Empire and War: Imperial Problems* (London: Empire Parliamentary Association, United Kingdom Branch). With a Prefatory Note signed by Howard D' Eviller 1917. This publication established the post-war priorities as Emigration (Earl Gray) and 'Constitutional position' (Viscount Milner), both relating primarily to the white empire.

<sup>43</sup> Memorandum on Emigration Policy, SU Archives, Hewins Mss, Official Papers Box 81, Section 117/17/1/1-40/ 5-6; Letter from Lady Londonderry in Minutes of the Second Meeting of the Government Emigration Office, 17 December 1918, *ibid.* 117/17/1/49-99/ 52-5.

<sup>44</sup> Agenda of the 4<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Government Emigration Committee, December 1918 and Minutes of the 5<sup>th</sup> meeting, 14 January. 1918, SU Archives, Hewins MSS, Official Papers, Box 81, Section 117/17/1/41-89

<sup>45</sup> G. F. Plant (1950) *SOSBW: A Survey of Voluntary Effort in Women's Empire Migration*, (London, SOSBW), p. 95-101.

<sup>46</sup> The Emigration of Women: Official Statement for the use of women who may wish to Emigrate to Other Parts of the Empire after the War, 1919, p. 5. Enclosed in, SU Archives, Hewins MSS, Official Papers, Box 81, Section 117/17/1/41-99; Memo from T.C.M., 9 January, 1919 including

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<sup>47</sup> Jean P. Smith (2013) The women's branch of the Commonwealth Relations Office: The society for the Overseas settlement of British Women, 1945-1964, paper presented at the Joint Conference of the Women's History Network and International Federation for Research into Women's History titled 'Women's Histories: the Local and the Global', Sheffield Hallam University 29 August -1 September, 2013.

<sup>48</sup> Grimble, 'Women as Empire Builders'; Gladys Potts (1924) Migration of Women within the Empire, *United Empire*, 15 (5), p. 228.

<sup>49</sup> SOSWB Annual Report, 1928; Society for the Overseas Settlement of British Women, Rhodesia Sub-Committee Report, 1935-7, RCS Archives, RCS, -52m77, pp. 9, 11, 18-19. See also a general survey Annual Reports SOSBW, 1919-1961 located in ibid.

<sup>50</sup> SOSWB Annual Report, 1948, p. 3; SOSWB Annual Report, 1947, pp. 3, 6. RCS Archives, RCS, -52m77

<sup>51</sup> SOSWB Annual Report, 1956, pp. 5, 6, 13-14, RCS Archives, RCS, -52m77..

<sup>52</sup> Tour of Central African Federation, SOSWB Annual Report, 1956 pp.5, 6, 13-14; The Australian Tour of the General Secretary, Miss Ellen Cumber, February to May 1951 enclosed in SOSWB Annual Report, 1951, pp.19-20; SOSBW Annual Report, 1952, pp. 5, 8; 'Report on the Canadian Tour of the General Secretary, Miss Ellen Cumber', Sept- Dec. 1949 enclosed in SOSWB Annual Report, 1949, p. 11; SOSWB Annual Report, 1949, p. 3, RCS Archives, RCS, -52m77.

<sup>53</sup> SOSWB Annual Report, 1953, pp. 7, 12, RCS Archives, RCS, -52m77.

<sup>54</sup> SOSWB Annual Reports, 1949-1956, RCS Archives, RCS, -52m77.

<sup>55</sup> Andrew Thompson (2005) *The Empire Strikes Back: The impact of Imperialism on Britain from the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Harlow: Pearson Education Ltd.), pp.144-9

<sup>56</sup> Susan Pedersen (2001), The Maternalist Moment in British Colonial Policy: the Controversy over 'Child Slavery' in Hong Kong, 1917-1941, *Past and Present*, 171 (2), pp. 164-5.

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<sup>57</sup> See. William Ormsby Gore (1938) *Correspondence Relating to the Welfare of Women in Tropical Africa* (London: HMSO), p. 9. For a comprehensive study of Rathbone's activism see, Susan Pedersen (2004) *Eleanor Rathbone and the Politics of Conscience*, (New Haven: Yale University Press), pp. 242-5.

<sup>58</sup> Vera Brittain (1940) *Testament of Friendship: The Story of Winifred Holtby* (London: Macmillan and Co.), p. 119. For fuller details of Wilkinson's political activism, see Paula Bartley (2014) *Ellen Wilkinson: from Red Suffragist to Government Minister* (London: Pluto Press), p.107.

<sup>59</sup> Pedersen, *The Maternalist Moment*, pp. 164-5.

<sup>60</sup> See Bruce Berman and John Lonsdale (1992) *Unhappy Valley: Conflict in Kenya and Africa, II* (Oxford: James Currey Ltd.), pp. 237, 385-6. See also Katherine, Duchess of Atholl (1958) *Working Partnership* (London: Arthur Baker). Atholl was elected when her husband, chairman of Jamaica Sugar Estates Ltd amongst other things, was elevated to the Lords. Somewhat ironically Athol was known as the 'Red Duchess' because of her anti-fascist position in the 1930s; see Frank Maitland (1937) *Searchlight on the Duchess of Atholl* (Pamphlet: Revolutionary Socialist Party).

<sup>61</sup> See Barbara Bush (1999) *Imperialism, Race and Resistance; Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge), pp. 118, 222.

<sup>62</sup> Ethel Mannin (1949) *Jungle Journey* (London: Jarrolds), pp. 178, 248

<sup>63</sup> Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, pp. 183-6, 197-7.

<sup>64</sup> For instance 'Red' Hilda Selwyn-Clarke, wife of the Director of Medical Services in Hong Kong (ex Gold Coast) and described as an 'unracist', was a graduate from a working-class background, a member of the Independent Labour Party and had worked for the anti-imperialist Fenner Brockway. See Susanna Hoe (1991) *The Private Life of Old Hong Kong; Western women in the British Colony, 1841-1941* (Hong Kong: Oxford University Press), pp. 181-2, 247-55.

<sup>65</sup> For instance, L. Bear (2004), *White Women and Men of Colour: Miscegenation Fears in Britain after the Great War*, *Gender and History*, 17 (1), pp.29-61; Lucy Bland (2013) *Modern Women on Trial: Sexual Transgression in the Age of the Flapper* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).

<sup>66</sup> Jordanna Bailkin (2012) *The Afterlife of Empire* ( Berkeley: University of California Press), pp. 80-81. See also Barbara Caine (2010) *Writing Cosmopolitan Lives: Joseph and Kwame Anthony*

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Appiah, *History Workshop Journal*, 70 (1) pp. 152-71; Michael Dutfield (1990) *A Marriage of Inconvenience: Persecution of Ruth and Seretse Khama* (London: Harper Collins).

<sup>67</sup> Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance*, pp. 197-7.

<sup>68</sup> Margery Perham (Ed.) (1936) *Ten Africans* (London: Faber and Faber), Introduction by Perham, p. 9. This volume is comprised of the life stories of ten educated Africans, 8 men and 2 women, some written by themselves and with whom Perham, and other contributors such as Audrey Richards had some personal contact.

- <sup>69</sup> Nellie Grant to Elspeth Huxley, 24 August 1953, Archives, Rhodes House, Oxford, Huxley Papers, GB 162 MSS. Afr. s. 782, Box 3, File 6.

<sup>70</sup> Elspeth Huxley (1964) *Back Streets, New Worlds; A Look at Immigrants in Britain* (London: Chatto and Windus) and (1954) *Four Guineas: A Journey Through West Africa* (London: Chatto and Windus).

<sup>71</sup> Alison Smith and Mary Bull (Eds) (1991), *Margery Perham and British Rule in Africa*, (London: Frank Cass), Introduction, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> Margery Perham (1944), African Facts and American Criticisms, *Foreign Affairs: An American Quarterly Review*, 22 (4), p. 445. Her contribution to policy making is summarised in Margery Perham (1967) *Colonial Sequence, 1930-1949: A Chronological Commentary upon British Colonial Policy, Especially in Africa* (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd). There is as yet no definitive biography of Perham. C. Brad Faught (2011) *Into Africa: The Imperial Life of Margery Perham* (London: I B Tauris) covers some aspects but as Helen McCarthy points out in *Reviews in History*, March 2013, we still need a fuller analysis of, for instance, Perham's attitudes to race and decolonisation. See <http://www.history.ac.uk/reviews/review/1391> accessed: 5 January, 2015.

<sup>73</sup> Preface to Anstey (1952), *The Economic Development of India* (London: Longmans; first published 1929). See also Rita Hinden (1941), *Plan for Africa: A Report Prepared for the Colonial Bureau of the Fabian Society* (London: George Allen and Unwin) and Rita Hinden (Ed), *Fabian Colonial Essays* (London: George Allen and Unwin).

<sup>74</sup> Katie Pickles (2001), Colonial Counterparts: The first academic women in Anglo- Canada, New Zealand and Australia, *Women's History Review*, 10 (2) pp. 273-299.

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<sup>75</sup> Colonial Research: memorandum by A. I. Richards summarising the recommendations of the social science group reports for the Colonial Research Advisory Committee (CRC 65) Appx. 1., Doc 164 in S R Ashton and S E Stockwell (Eds) (1996) *Imperial Policy and Colonial Practice, 1925-1945*, Parts 1 & 2, British Documents of the End of Empire Series A (London: HMSO) Part 2, pp. 355-361.

<sup>76</sup> Audrey I. Richards (1971), *The Colonial Office and the Organisation of Social Research*, *Anthropological Forum*, 4 (2), pp. 168-189.

<sup>77</sup> Information from Audrey Richards Papers, Archives, British Library of Political and Economic Science (BLPS), London School of Economics.

<sup>78</sup> In 1960 Richards became president of the Royal African Institute. As Vice-Chancellor of London University 1948-1951, Dame Lillian Margery Penson (1896-1963), was a strong champion of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, and remained Chair of the Committee of Management until 1961. Penson was a Professor of History, Bedford College, 1930-1962 and a member of the Commission on Higher Education in the Colonies, 1943-1945. Sally Chilver became Director of the Institute of Commonwealth Studies, Oxford, 1957-1961 and made an important contribution as a historian to studies of Cameroonian society. As Secretary of the CSSRC, she helped to establish the CSSRC supervised research institutes in East and West Africa. See Shirley Ardener (1996), *The Catalyst: Chilver at the Crossroads*, in Ian Fowler and David Zeitlyn (Eds), *African Crossroads: Intersections between History and Ethnography in Cameroon* (Oxford: Bergahn Books).

<sup>79</sup> Richards to Sally Chilver, 11, 27 September, 1956, Richards Papers, File 16/10.

<sup>80</sup> Richards to Arnold Plant, 12. November, 1956, Richards Papers, File 16/11.

<sup>81</sup> See Charlotte Hastings (2010), *A search for the 'suitable' candidate: Sara Burstall, Margaret Faith Tolfree and Colonial Office recruitment of women teachers to Africa c.1925-30*, paper presented at *The 19th Conference of the Women's History Network*, titled 'Performing the Self: Women's Lives in Historical Perspective' University of Warwick, 9-11 September, 2010. See also Margaret Faith Tolfree (1939) *Child Welfare. A Course of Lessons on Child Welfare Based on the Nigerian Syllabus for Girls in Middle Schools* [With Illustrations] (London: the Sheldon Press).

<sup>82</sup> Bell prepared a seminal document for the British Government on behalf of the Acting Civil Commissioner in Baghdad, Arnold Talbot Wilson (1920) *Review of the Civil Administration of Mesopotamia* (London: HMSO). See also Gertrude Bell Archive Online, Newcastle University, <http://www.gerty.ncl.ac.uk>

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<sup>83</sup> Molly Huggins (1967) *Too Much to Tell: An Autobiography* (London: Heinemann), pp. 28, 33, 61, 68, 116-7.

<sup>84</sup> Barrow, Christine (1999), Men, Women and Family in the Caribbean: A Review in Patricia Mohammed and Catherine Shepherd (Eds) *Gender in Caribbean Development* (Kingston: Jamaica, Canoe Press; first published, 1988), p.151.

<sup>85</sup> <http://www.coronaworldwide.org/> . Accessed 14 November, 2014.

See also Anthony Kirk-Greene (2001) (Ed), *Glimpses of Empire: A Corona Anthology* (London: I.B. Taurus); Cecillie Swaisland (1992) *The Ladies Corona Society: 40 Years' Service, 1950-1990* (London: The Society).

<sup>86</sup> Letter from Treasury to H. T. Bourdillon, 28.10. 53; Minute by Thomas Lloyd, 27.6.53, National Archives (NA), 'Women's Corona Society. Financial Assistance For', CO 866/98, 1953-4.

<sup>87</sup> Memo from W.D Sweaney to Mr J.K Thompson, 31 Oct. 1966, NA, 'Women's Corona Society', OD 18/120.

<sup>88</sup> Women's Corona Society pamphlet publicising introductory courses to be held in 1966-1967 for women going overseas, enclosed in *ibid.*

<sup>89</sup> Andrew Thompson (Ed.) (2011), *Britain's Experience of Empire in the Twentieth Century*, Oxford: Oxford University Press), Introduction, p. 26.

<sup>90</sup> C.E. Moore and S.R. Wood (1935), What Moore and Wood Think of the English *The Black Man*, 1 (7) pp.14-15; Karl E. Meyer, Shareen B. Brysac (2008), *Kingmakers: The Invention of the Modern Middle East* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2008), p. 162.

<sup>91</sup> Furse, *Acuparious*, p. 306.

<sup>92</sup> Audrey Richards to Sally Chilver, 22 November, 1983, Richards Papers, 16/9.

<sup>93</sup> See Helen Callaway (1987) *Gender, Culture and Empire: European Women in Colonial Nigeria* (London: MacMillan), pp. 142-4.

<sup>94</sup> See, for instance, Bronislaw Malinowski to Lucy Mair, 3 July, 1932; Evans-Pritchard to Fortes, 19 July 1940 cited in Jack Goody (1995) *The Expansive Moment: Anthropology in Britain and Africa, 1918-1970* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press), pp. 69-71.