



**LADIES OF THE COUNTRY HOUSE: IRISH ARISTOCRATIC WOMEN,
1870-1918**

by

ITA M. MURPHY

THESIS FOR THE DEGREE OF M. LITT

DEPARTMENT OF HISTORY

MAYNOOTH UNIVERSITY

HEAD OF DEPARTMENT: Dr. Jacinta Prunty
Supervisor of Research: Professor Terence Dooley

2017

Contents

Acknowledgements	i
Abbreviations	ii
Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Women and marriage	9
‘Marriage is a very serious affair’	9
The preamble to marriage: Ralph Wicklow & Gladys Hamilton.....	16
Motherhood	21
Pregnancy and childbirth.....	23
Children	26
Conclusion.....	31
Chapter 2: Marriage, scandal, and Irish aristocratic women.....	32
Scandal and affairs	37
The political clout of Baron Connemara	46
Private musings and censorship	51
Conclusion.....	53
Chapter 3: The American Influence	55
‘American colony in London’	55
‘Exceptional advantages and introductions’	57
‘Swallowed by members of the British aristocracy’	60
‘Outside fairyland one must have bread and butter’	63
‘Romance vanishes before the reality of their habits’	66
Americans in Ireland	69
Conclusion.....	78
Chapter 4: Noblesse oblige: the spirit of charity and benevolence.....	80
‘Each estate was a kingdom’	80
Pleas for assistance	84
The move into the public sphere	90
Mary, countess of Meath	94
Conclusion.....	100
Chapter 5: ‘The sword of Damocles’: death, grief and daily life during the Great War	102

‘Everybody is mad about the war’: perceptions and facts.....	102
‘Cheerfully sacrificed on the altar of patriotism’: death and bereavement	108
‘A brave face on our sorrow’	114
Impositions of the war on daily life.....	116
‘A supreme moment’	123
Conclusion.....	124
Chapter 6: Aristocratic women and the Great War	125
Response to war: Lady Beatrix Beresford, Lady Augusta Dillon and Lady Henrietta MacDonnell	125
Belgian Refugees.....	136
Voluntary Aid Detachments	140
Conclusion.....	148
Conclusion	150
Bibliography.....	153

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisor Professor Terence Dooley, for his support, encouragement and patience throughout this process. Members of the History Department at Maynooth University, both teaching and administrative staff, also deserve acknowledgement for their encouragement and support, in particular the exceptional lecturers who inspired me. I would also like to thank Professor Marian Lyons for her kindness and support throughout my journey and Dr. Jacinta Prunty for her invaluable assistance. My fellow students deserve my appreciation for their friendship and support. Last but by no means least to Joe, Conor, Lee, Adam and Rory, my sincerest thanks, for their sacrifices, steadfast support, patience, and love.

Abbreviations

BRCS	British Red Cross Society
DGVO	Director General of Voluntary Organisations
GWFA	Galway War Funds Association
HRH	His / Her Royal Highness
ICA	Irish Countrywomen's Association
IWA	Irish Women's Association
IWHSD	Irish War Hospital Supply Depot
JWC	Joint War Committee
N.L.I.	National Library of Ireland
OBE	Order of the British Empire
POW	Prisoner of War
PRONI	Public Record Office of Northern Ireland
RTO	Railway Transport Officer
SSFA	Soldiers and Sailors Family Association
UI	United Irishwomen
VAD	Voluntary Aid Detachment
YMCA	Young Men's Christian Association

Introduction

Far from being an insignificant sub-group, aristocratic women played important roles within their country homes and in wider society. This research, which focuses on the period of great social, political and economic change, 1870-1918, examines the role of women in relation to their feminine duties, how aspects of their social lives including marriage arrangements and leisure activities changed over the period, and the diversity of roles they assumed during the Great War. The role of aristocratic women and the Irish country house has been an overlooked aspect of Irish history with the result that few published works exist on the topic. By means of a case study, aristocratic women step forth from the dusty letters and diaries of family archives lending their words to provide a more nuanced understanding of their roles and experiences in a staunchly patriarchal society.

Aims & Objectives

The aim of this study is to elucidate the important role and significance of noble women within their own class during the period 1870-1918. Three areas of their lives in which they played pivotal roles - the home, the locale and the nation – are examined. This qualitative case study uses a combination of statistical and primary source analysis leading to an understanding of the perspectives and experiences of aristocratic women. The approaches to marriage and the role and function of marriage within the endogamous ruling class are examined from the viewpoint of the female. In its traditional form marriage was being undermined with an increase in marital scandals and divorce.¹ Additionally, the frequency with which American heiress' and actresses married into the aristocracy heralded a change in the social order where the purity of bloodlines was threatened and had the potential to breach long established familial ties and networks. The private charitable endeavours of aristocratic women highlight their central role within the landlord system. Their activities within the home, the demesne and the wider community, forged and cemented bonds and sustained a reciprocal system of loyalty and deference which had been practised for generations. With the outbreak of the Great War in 1914 aristocratic women played a crucial role by undertaking charitable activities, and providing leadership to a variety of patriotic organisations. These war-time activities,

¹ See David Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (New York, 1990), pp 341-87.

focused on soldiers and prisoners of war and their dependents, involved a diverse array of undertakings by women. Such activities can be considered an extension of women's roles, but also a broadening of the traditional roles which they had played for generations. Significantly, many women undertook these new tasks while dealing with the absence of their military husbands. Thus while the social function of women was widening, especially during the Great War, the duty of an aristocratic woman retained its primary focus which was the maintenance of the family and kinship networks.

Literature Review

The role of Irish aristocratic women has been under-played in Irish historiography in comparison to Britain. In fact, there are only a handful of published articles regarding elite women in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries including a regional case study by Maeve O'Riordan.² Focusing on power structures within elite homes of eight Munster families, O'Riordan finds that women actively assisted their families 'through their position as household manager' and that unlike the idealised Victorian model, men's and women's roles overlapped in the management of family and estate.³ Terence Dooley reasoned that women in the country house were largely passed over because 'of the non-status of women at the time'.⁴ Historians who have examined the governing class, and particularly the aristocracy, have done so predominantly from the perspective of the male. This has led to a skewed understanding of the roles of women. David Cannadine in his seminal but male-centered work justifies the exclusion of elite women by virtue of the fact that 'wealth, status, power and class consciousness ... were preponderantly masculine assets and attributes.'⁵ However, his inference that women were only concerned with the domestic sphere is questionable.⁶ Concentrating on the public role of women, Maryann Gialanella Valiuis and Mary O'Dowd have shown that Irish women have a long history of public action and were not inert entities through history. Their work challenged the exclusion of women from the historical narrative and revealed the part that women played

² Maeve O'Riordan, 'Home, family and society: women of the Irish landed class, 1860-1914, a Munster case study' (2014); restricted access. See also, Maeve O'Riordan, 'Assuming control: elite women as household managers in late nineteenth-century Ireland' in Ciaran O'Neill (ed.), *Irish elites in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2013), pp 83-98; Neil Watts, 'Women of the big house families of Ireland and marriage 1860-1920' (2014) is also restricted.

³ O'Riordan, 'Assuming control', p. 85.

⁴ Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), p. 16.

⁵ Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 7.

⁶ *Ibid.*

in local and national groups.⁷ However, the need to examine the pivotal role played by aristocratic women in supporting and maintaining the power and authority of the ruling class remains to be done.

The aristocracy was a distinct social group within the island of Ireland, set apart by their shared 'similar lifestyle with their English counterparts'.⁸ According to Mark Bence-Jones the ethnic diversity and conflicting allegiances of the aristocracy led to disagreements regarding the nationality of the landed gentry in Ireland.⁹ In his estimation, by 1870, the vast majority considered themselves as Irish, with their allegiance 'not so much to Britain as to the Crown'.¹⁰ While comparisons can be made with the British aristocracy there are equally strong points of contrast because of Ireland's distinctive social, political and religious circumstances.¹¹ In Ireland in the period 1870-1918, the political situation was very different. Many estates were in debt or under financial stress due to agricultural depression; and the war years in Ireland were characterised by further difficulties. The experiences of women in Ireland, therefore, differed to that of their counterparts in Britain. Pat Jalland carried out a detailed examination of the social and political roles and attitudes of women in Victorian and Edwardian Britain. Her work illustrates how the lives and activities of elite women differed greatly from the prescribed ideals of womanhood which centred around marital harmony, domesticity and motherhood.¹² Similarly, Susie Steinbach has examined women in England from all class backgrounds from the 1760s to 1914. By acknowledging the shifts in social conditions from urbanisation and industrialisation, Steinbach provides a comprehensive analysis of how the lives of women changed.¹³ In the Irish setting Rosemary Cullen Owens has explored the role and status of women over a hundred-year period up to 1970, and highlights the forces that brought change within Irish society.¹⁴ These works are

⁷ Maryann Gialanella Valiulis & Mary O'Dowd (eds.), *Women and Irish history* (Dublin, 1997).

⁸ Deborah Wilson, *Women, marriage and property in wealthy landed families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 2008), p. 5.

⁹ Mark Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy* (London, 1998), p. 15.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*; see also, Wilson, *Women, marriage and property*, p. 5; Diane Urquhart, *The Ladies of Londonderry* (London, 2007), p. 5; Roger Sawyer, *We are but women, women in Ireland's history* (London, 1993), pp 34-5 and p. 44; Nora Robertson, *Crowned harp, memories of the last years of the Crown in Ireland* (Dublin, 1960), p. 54.

¹¹ See Myrtle Hill, *Women in Ireland a century of change* (Belfast, 2003), p. 51.

¹² Pat Jalland, *Women, marriage and politics 1860-1914* (Oxford, 1988); Pat Jalland & John Hooper, *Women from birth to death* (Brighton, 1986).

¹³ Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914, a social history* (London, 2004).

¹⁴ Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870-1970*, (Dublin, 2005).

significant in their own right as general social histories; however, the aristocracy receives little attention. Pamela Horn has examined high society before and after the turn of the twentieth century, from the perspective of social activities centred upon the season, the ritual of ‘coming out’, marriage, motherhood and the role of ‘Lady Bountiful.’¹⁵ Unfortunately, however, this work offers little insight into the Irish aristocracy.

Context – 1870-1918

The power and wealth of the nobility had been declining throughout Europe for much of the nineteenth century.¹⁶ For the most part the Irish nobility remained entrenched in their traditions as landowners and authority figures, symbols of the crown, and guardians of their estates. The period under examination, 1870-1918, saw great change to the social and political spectrum, stretching from the beginning of Home Rule and the Land Acts, and ending at the cessation of the Great War. The period after 1918 is deserving of its own study in relation to the aristocracy in Ireland. Not only did this period see the expansion of the franchise, the decline in power and prosperity of the landed gentry, but it also saw an increased engagement by women in social, cultural and political movements, many of whom were seeking parity of ‘education and legal rights for women with their male peers’.¹⁷ By 1901 one prominent lady was able to write in the *Irish Times* that ‘There will always be those who share the views of William II of Germany, and think that the alliteration, “Church, children, cooking” should limit the aspirations of half the human race.’¹⁸ However, while change may have been aspired to by some, duty towards aristocratic standards was highly valued.

David Cannadine states that the aristocracy were the holders of ‘highly esteemed titles of honour that defined and preserved the gradations of society, and their own position at the very top.’¹⁹ For the purposes of this study, the term ‘aristocracy’ denotes titled members of the landed class; those who held hereditary titles of duke, marquess, earl, viscount and baron. Baronets are also included in this study as members of the ‘lesser nobility of the

¹⁵ Pamela Horn, *High society the English social elite, 1880-1914* (Stroud, 1992).

¹⁶ Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, pp 8-25.

¹⁷ Rosemary Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland, 1870-1970* (Dublin, 2005), p. xviii.

¹⁸ Lady Knightley of Fawsley, “Women in Affairs” in the *Irish Times*, 14 Sept. 1901.

¹⁹ Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 11.

British empire'.²⁰ Though holders of hereditary knighthoods they had no entitlement to sit as members of the House of Lords.²¹

The practice of strict settlement meant that aristocratic estates, houses, heirlooms and titles were kept together, descending intact through the male line under the law of primogeniture.²² Lifestyle and attitude distinguished the aristocracy from the rest of the population. Their sons were educated at public schools; they resided on country estates and had town houses; they enjoyed a leisured lifestyle within their own social network. Central to maintaining this was the London and Dublin season, where high society gathered each year for a series of events, dinners, and entertainments, where marriages were arranged within a social circle heavily supervised by diligent mothers and fathers. As a group, the aristocracy functioned like an exclusive club, its members living their lives within certain boundaries, maintained by strong kinship bonds. Ties and connections were cemented through family links, education, a common understanding of what was meant by good manners, the rituals of the social round and moral priorities (even when religion might have been expected to divide).²³ Additionally, characteristics such as refinement, propriety, breeding, decorum, elegance and superiority were considered synonymous with being an aristocrat. For their part, women were believed to be the upholders of the morals and standards of society. This small influential class was held together by a common sense of purpose.²⁴

Methodology

This thesis is based on the personal papers of nine families which provide a more nuanced and comprehensive description of the aristocratic experience.²⁵ The evidence is primarily drawn from the correspondence of women who were highly literate. The women originated from prominent aristocratic Irish families, some much wealthier than others. The sample used is not geographically restricted to any one region of Ireland, but includes

²⁰ *Debritt's Illustrated Peerage* (London, 1876), p. xxxiii.

²¹ By 1880 there were 580 peers, 431 of whom were entitled to sit in the House of Lords. There were also 7 peeresses, 41 Scottish and 101 Irish peers who had no UK titles and therefore unable to sit in the House of Lords. Additionally, there were 856 baronets of the United Kingdom. See, 'Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, pp 11-2; *Debritt's Illustrated Peerage* (London, 1876), pp xviii-xxxvi.

²² Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 12.

²³ Roger Sawyer, *We are but women*, p. 41; See also, Wilson, *Women, marriage and property*, p. 5.

²⁴ Sawyer, *We are but women, women in Ireland's history*, p. 41.

²⁵ The statistical information provided in the thesis comes from a sample of 149 aristocratic families during the period under survey.

families from the four provinces. In 1883 the wealthiest of these families owning over 70,000 acres, included the Abercorns, Leinsters and the Waterfords, while at the bottom end families such as the Mahons and Fingalls held around 9,000 acres.²⁶ The Louths held just under 3,000 acres in Ireland.²⁷

The bibliographic details of individuals were collected from a variety of sources including the census material of Ireland and of Britain, John Bateman, *Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1883), Sir Bernard Burke, *The landed gentry of Ireland* (n.p., 2010), and a large variety of newspapers. The digitisation of newspapers has made a wealth of information available to researchers that would not have been possible to access a number of years ago. Titles from *The Times* of London to the *Otautau Standard* of New Zealand indicate just how diverse these sources are. Newspapers reveal much about the changing attitudes to the aristocracy as well as highlighting public interest in their lifestyles. Therefore, the family correspondence has been supplemented by Irish newspaper articles primarily taken from the *Irish Times*, it being the main establishment paper of the day. However, a wide selection of other local newspapers was also used as well as an assortment of English and international newspapers. These sources are not without their inherent problems including bias and factual inaccuracies and thus need to be treated with due care.

The private letters and correspondence located within family collections provide valuable and revealing testimony to the experiences, observations and opinions of women. Significantly, personal papers are retained more extensively by aristocratic families than by any other class, though there are invariably gaps within the collections. It was not uncommon for families to destroy their papers or even to censor the contents.²⁸ Writing formed a vital link in communications, with letters providing glimpses into the minute details of family life. Correspondence between female relatives and friends are often of a gossipy nature, which suggests that the contents were intended only for the reader and not for public consumption. Some collections examined are much more voluminous than others. For example, the Leslie papers are comprised of over 2,000 folders stretching from

²⁶ John Bateman, *Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1883).

²⁷ Ibid.

²⁸ Anne-Marie Millim, 'The Victorian diary: between the public and the private' in *Literature Compass*, Vol. vii, No. x (2010), pp 977-988.

1619 to 1992 and containing business and legal correspondence, journals and writings, but also a large number of private letters, scrapbooks and photographs. The Louth papers in comparison contain 87 folders, the bulk of which hold estate, business and legal correspondences with only 4 folders containing correspondence between Baron Louth and his wife.

In addition, many published contemporary works augmented the manuscript evidence and were an invaluable source of information and insight. These included: Clodagh Anson, *Victorian days* (London, 1957), Anita Leslie, *The gilt and the gingerbread* (London, 1981), Elizabeth Countess of Fingall, *Seventy years young* (Dublin, 2005), Margaret F. Young, *The letters of a noble woman, Mrs. La Touche of Harristown* (London, 1908), George de Stacpoole, *Irish and other memories* (London, 1922), Charles Beresford, *Memories of Lord Charles Beresford* (London, 1914), Lady Violet Greville, *Vignettes of memory* (London, n.d.), Reginald Meath and *The diaries of Mary Countess of Meath* (London, 1914). Memoirs can be considered nostalgic testimonies written years after events occurred and therefore subject to misrepresentation or distortion of the facts. However, they do provide emotional and personal context to past events, a human dimension, so to speak, to historical affairs. Similarly, diaries can be read ‘as direct imprints of and contributors to cultural life,’ revealing biographical details of their authors despite frequently being heavily censored by the authors themselves.²⁹ Consequently, to substantiate the validity of such sources, cross-referencing proved vital.

Chapter Overview

Chapter one examines Irish aristocratic marriages from 1870-1918, inter-marriage between the great families, how women responded to their duty towards family and motherhood, and the pivotal role women played in the marriage market. Chapter two explores issues concerning scandal and divorce within the aristocracy, which, from the nineteenth century, highlighted the undermining of the carefully constructed traditions which had been in place for generations. Newspapers at the time were quick to realise the insatiable appetite among the public for salacious and scandalous stories, while the aristocracy strove to maintain the acceptable public perception of their class. The erosion of the old values of the aristocracy continued as heirs married American heiresses. This

²⁹ Millim, ‘The Victorian diary’, p. 977.

theme is examined in chapter three. Chapter four concentrates on the duty of aristocratic women towards their homes, demesnes and locales. Their function, especially the notion of public responsibility towards the poor and needy, remained embedded within their role as benevolent chatelaines. Chapter five examines the impact the Great War had on the lives of aristocratic women. The unprecedented deaths of loved-ones forced women to rely heavily on their class to maintain some semblance of normality. While bereavement became commonplace, the intrusion of the war was apparent in a variety of ways in daily life that have been little explored up to now. Chapter six expands on the public role of women developed in chapter four. Here, the war-time activities, driven by a sense of purpose and duty, are explored, highlighting the diverse endeavours of many women. Finally, the conclusion will emphasise the pertinent findings of the research.

Chapter 1: Women and marriage

While much has been written about late nineteenth and early twentieth century aristocratic marriage from an English perspective, little work has been done in relation to matrimony and the Irish aristocracy particularly from the female perspective.¹ Marriage was central for the inter-generational transfer of wealth, power, values, and experiences and for the most part the aristocracy were endogamous, marrying within their own social class. The aim of this chapter is to explore what marriage meant to the Irish aristocratic class, how they approached it, how the role of women was viewed, and how, above all, women responded towards the ideal of duty within the patriarchal system.

‘Marriage is a very serious affair’²

Marriage was the most important ‘social institution for the great majority of women in Victorian and Edwardian Britain’.³ The union of a couple in matrimony was seen as both a legal and religious contract. However, the traditionally held social and economic interests, which determined marriage choice, remained at the core of many marriages.⁴ According to Claudia Nelson, there were a number of reasons why many women got married including romantic or companionable love, a longing for children, the desire for a function in life beyond simply being a daughter, for social status and financial security.⁵ From the point of view of the aristocracy the forging of family alliances and the extension of emotional ties amongst a kinship network was also important.⁶ Edith Somerville pointed out that Irish estates were like kingdoms, where the lack of locomotion meant love thy neighbour ‘or, at all events, to marry her, was almost inevitable when matches were a matter of mileage.’⁷ Even Lady Daisy Fingall recognised early that ‘Irish society was too small to have the circles and cliques of London. Everyone knew everyone else.’⁸

¹ See, Pamela Horn, *High society the English social elite 1880-1914* (Stroud, 1994), pp 47-102; Susie Steinbach, *Women in England, 1760-1914* (London, 2004), pp 78-104; Pat Jalland, *Women marriage and politics, 1860-1914* (Oxford, 1986), pp 21-113; Pamela Horn, *Ladies of the manor* (Stroud, 2014), pp 50-102; F.M.L. Thompson, *The rise of respectable society* (Cambridge, 1988), pp 51-113.

² ‘Philosophy of marriage’ in Alfred Crowquill (ed.) *Bentleys miscellany* Vol. ix (1842), p. 615.

³ Jalland, *Women, marriage and politics*, p. 45; For the ecclesiastical and statute law regarding marriage, see Wilson, *Women, marriage and property*, pp 5-8 and 15-35.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 93.

⁵ Claudia Nelson, *Family ties in Victorian England* (Westport, 2007), p. 11; see also, Jessica Gerard. *Country house life, family and servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), pp 101-6.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p.13; see also, Thompson, *The rise of respectable society, 1830-1900*, p. 106.

⁷ Edith Somerville & Martin Ross, *Irish Memories* (London, 1917), p. 68.

⁸ Elizabeth, countess of Fingall, *Seventy years young* (Dublin, 2005), p. 84.

This is evidenced by the inter-marriage between Irish aristocratic families. Most aristocratic families were related to one another: the Waterfords with the Lansdownes, Leslies, and Oranmore and Brownes; the Wicklows with the Abercorns, Powerscourts, and Tyrone; the Donerailes with the Bandons, Castletowns, and Shannons; and the Leslies with the Portarlingtons, Waterfords, Lansdownes and Dungannons. Irish peers were also linked with many of the noble families in England such as the Curzons, Lichfields, Beaufords, Butes, though the Abercorns excelled themselves with marriages to some of the most prominent families in Britain including the Lascelles of Harewood, Spencer-Churchills of Marlborough, and the Thynnes of Bath.

An examination of British aristocratic marriage patterns over several hundred years noted that endogamy was the dominant marriage pattern up to the first two decades of the twentieth century.⁹ However, the Irish veered from this norm and tended to follow their own path. Of the thirteen women in this research sample who originated from English and Scottish titled families and married Irish peers, nine married a husband of a higher rank than her father, while only three married husbands of a lower rank. Brides who came from the ranks of the Irish peerage displayed more diversity in their choice of husbands: of the thirty-three Irish brides from the sample, sixteen married peers of a lower rank, while seventeen married peers of an equal or higher rank than that of their fathers.¹⁰ One explanation for this diversity may be due to a focus on wealth rather than on rank and position, while another may be the notion of a companionable marriage gaining prominence among the aristocracy at the time.

To secure a partner a woman's reputation had to be impeccable and above reproach. Appropriate behaviour was vital as the rules that presided over women's social interactions were often unbending. As a result, a woman's virginity was intensely guarded with her activities and acquaintances under constant scrutiny. According to Anita Leslie, 'innocence was highly valued. No man wanted to marry a girl with a 'bold eye'. The double standard prevailed. It was considered natural for young gentlemen to keep

⁹ Kimberly F. Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers: marriage patterns of aristocratic British women, 1485-2000* (Kansas, 2011), pp 54-58; see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 347.

¹⁰ Eleven Irish brides married peers of a higher rank to that of their fathers, while six married peers of an equal rank to that of their fathers. See also, Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers*, for figures across the British Isles.

mistresses but their sisters must not even suspect the facts of life – those were to be learned on the wedding night'.¹¹ When the Leslies held a ball in 1883, Lady Constance commented on the daughter of a friend who 'looked too lovely... the Princess admired her enormously.'¹² Constance was pleased that the girl 'did not dance with the Prince – she is too young and pretty and it is considered alas quite a draw back to a girl to be admired by him! So low alas! He has fallen – You know I am not ill-natured.'¹³ Without exception the task of preparing for, chaperoning, monitoring and guiding a debutante was conducted by women. The marquess of Waterford's daughter, Clodagh Beresford, had as her chaperone her aunt Mary, duchess of Abercorn who took her duty towards her orphaned niece seriously.¹⁴ Clodagh vividly remembered the day of her 'coming out' in 1898:

Queen Victoria held the Drawing-rooms in St. James Palace in those days in the daytime, so that everyone looked too ridiculous for words sitting all dressed up in evening gowns, veils and feathers at eleven o'clock in the morning in their carriages along the Mall.... Crowds came to stare at them, and their comments were very unflattering sometimes.¹⁵

In relation to how women were reared and socialised, there appears to have been little difference between the Irish and English experience. Home education concentrated on producing suitable wives with the ultimate focus on acquiring a worthy and wealthy husband. Surprisingly, many had quite a relaxed home life particularly in relation to spending time amongst their tenants and servants which made them at ease with working-class people.¹⁶ Stella Maxwell felt this particularly when asked to nurse officers during the Great War and found that she was much more relaxed with regular soldiers.¹⁷ Anita Leslie believed that these interactions with working people placed aristocratic girls in the

¹¹ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 34; See also, Mary Scharlieb, *The seven ages of woman* (London, 1915), p. 68 and pp 76-6.

¹² Constance Leslie to Capt. Seymour Damer, 17 Aug. 1883 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers MS 49,495/2/98). See also, Anita Leslie, *Edwardians in love* (London, 1972), pp 14-20; Angela Lambert, *Unquiet souls* (London, 1985), pp 33-48.

¹³ Constance Leslie to Capt. Seymour Damer, 17 Aug. 1883 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers MS 49,495/2/98). See also, Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, pp 14-20; Lambert, *Unquiet souls*, pp 33-48.

¹⁴ Clodagh Anson, *Victorian days* (London, 1957), p 132.

¹⁵ Anson, *Victorian days*, p 131.

¹⁶ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, n.d. (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS. 18 616/7); see also, Leslie, *Edwardians in love*; Anson, *Victorian days*.

¹⁷ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, n.d. (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS. 18 616/7).

invaluable position of being able to deal with adult company later on in life and indeed secure potential husbands through their ease of conversation and quick wit.¹⁸ Their outings were chaperoned, and all came out into society either in London or Dublin. While influenced by their mothers, many young girls within this controlled environment chose their own partners, and established bonds before consenting to engagement.¹⁹ While this was a change from earlier in the nineteenth century, and provided some level of independence for girls, it was a long way from being independent. Debutantes were well aware that if the goal of matrimony had not been achieved by the end of their second or third season, their chance of securing a good match would sharply recede.²⁰

In fact during the period 1870-1914 the average bride married around the age of age twenty-four; her bridegroom, who was expected to have demonstrated before his marriage his ability to support a family, was typically a couple of years older.²¹ Exceptions to this were Aileen Maxwell, Baroness Farnham, Belle Le Poer Trench, countess of Clancarty and Rose Taylour, marchioness of Headfort, all of whom were a year older than their husbands.²² Amongst the sample of brides examined, those who married from 1870 onwards, averaged just under twenty-four years of age for their first marriage. The death of a husband frequently resulted in a woman remarrying and during this period eighteen second marriages took place. Brides tended to be older, with the average age of forty-one years, upon remarriage. Prior to 1870 the average age upon marriage was twenty-five years, which was older than anticipated. The perception that women married much earlier in the nineteenth century is inaccurate. Indeed, Anita Leslie's assertion that girls married straight out of the schoolroom is questionable.²³ Certainly there were many who did marry in their early twenties, but it was not the norm. Of course exceptions did occur with one being Lady Fingall, who married aged seventeen during her first season in Dublin.²⁴ It is perhaps high profile examples such as this that have skewed the historical perception.

¹⁸ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*; see also, Anita Leslie. *The gilt and the gingerbread* (London, 1981), p. 16-7.

¹⁹ Susie Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914, a social history* (London, 2004), p. 117.

²⁰ Pamela Horn, *Ladies of the manor* (Stroud, 2014), p. 53.

²¹ A sample of 228 marriages were examined to holder or heirs of the Irish peerage: 109 marriages before 1870; 91 marriages between 1870 and 1900, and 28 marriages between 1900 and 1920.

²² See 1901 and 1911 census returns for Lady Farnham and Lady Headfort, National Archives of Ireland, available at www.census.nationalarchives.ie. [18 Jan. 2016]; see 1871 UK Census for the Bilton family available at findmypast.co.uk [15 Jan. 2016]; Biographies, see Appendix I, for Belle Clancarty, p.151; for Aileen Farnham, p. 176; for Rose Headfort, p. 153.

²³ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 33.

²⁴ See Fingall, *Seventy years young*, pp 88-96.

However, taking the Gormanstons as an example, the 13th Viscountess Lucretia was married at thirty-two, her daughter-in-law Ismay married at twenty-five, while the 15th Viscountess Eileen was twenty-eight years old. Similarly, Augusta Dillon, Baroness Clonbrock married at the age of twenty-seven while her only daughter to wed, Edith, did so aged twenty-six. While Lady Constance Leslie had married in 1856 at the age of twenty, her daughter-in-law Leonie was twenty-five, and in the following generation Lady Marjorie Leslie was thirty.

Undoubtedly, protecting the interests of the family were of utmost importance and likely to be the reason for so much discussion in relation to marital affairs in personal letters. Safeguarding a son's or daughter's reputation was to the fore of most parents' minds, particularly when one considers the intentions of men such as J.H. Cashel FitzSymons Farrell who wrote to his friend Randal, Lord Louth in 1895 detailing his financial difficulties: 'So many curs up on my heels [sic] that I am almost hunted to death'.²⁵ Having been let down by two ladies of means he now set his eye on a widow, a Mrs Butler who had 8,000 acres in Co. Clare: 'I refused Mrs Butler last year and am sorry I did so, for it is difficult to get back a lost chance. She is wealthy and I think I can compel her to marry me. I could then hunt the County Clare hounds...' as Mrs Butler's late father-in-law was the master of hounds at one time.²⁶ FitzSymons Farrell's aspirations for marriage seem to have been purely for financial security and the obvious benefits that came with it. When Alfred Bury, earl of Charleville, knew he would not be alive to protect his sister Emily's interests in the marriage market, he asked her to seriously contemplate marriage and to 'maintain the credit of the family.'²⁷ Perhaps he was warning her of fortune-hunters as Lady Emily was his heiress. Before considering such a step, he implored her not to 'trust entirely to your own judgement, but consult the D...s and Auntie and they will I am sure advise [sic] you for the best'.²⁸ However, men were not alone in displaying interest in the affairs of women.

²⁵ J.H. Cashel FitzSymons Farrell to Lord Randal Louth, 14 Mar. 1895 (N.L.I., Louth Papers, MS 40,099/6).

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ Alfred Bury, 5th earl of Charleville to Lady Emily Bury, 31 Oct. 1874 (Westmeath County Archives, Howard Bury Papers G/55).

²⁸ Alfred Bury, 5th earl of Charleville to Lady Emily Bury, 31 Oct. 1874 (Westmeath County Archives, Howard Bury Papers G/55).

When it was apparent that marriage was contracted purely for financial reasons, women frequently showed their displeasure. While understanding the importance of money, it did not negate the desire for love and companionship. In 1886 Lucretia Preston, Viscountess Gormanston sarcastically wrote: ‘L[or]d Castlerosse is going to marry a Miss Baring, plenty of cash.’²⁹ Even her own relatives did not escape her sharp criticism; on the subject of her nephew Arthur Preston’s marriage to Ina Spencer in 1887 she viewed it ‘the silliest marriage possible.’³⁰ Though the reason for her view remains unclear, much of her commentary centred around finances.³¹ When Lord Lewis Clifford married Mabel Towneley in 1890 she wrote that ‘he has been asking her occasionally for four years, she was always afraid of being wanted for her money, for 10,000 a year.’³² Lack of finances was not always a deterrent to marriage; Ismay Preston noted in relation to the proposed marriage of Billy Filgate and Miss Smith: ‘they are determined to marry one another tho’ his father will not hear of it, and neither of them have any money.’³³ In 1908 May Sands became engaged to Hugh Howard, younger brother of Ralph, earl of Wicklow. Lady Gladys Wicklow professed her delight at ‘having a sister-in-law’ but was concerned that his intended was good enough for her brother-in-law.³⁴ It would appear that perhaps any doubt regarding the union stemmed from finances, with Ralph concerned that the bride’s father would ‘do the right thing in the matter of money.’³⁵ Evidently matters were rectified and the couple married later that year. One marriage which was whole-heartedly welcomed by all parties was that of Elizabeth Hope, daughter of Sir Edward Hope and his wife Constance Christina Leslie, to Henry Petty-Fitzmaurice, son and heir of the 5th marquess of Lansdowne. The Lansdownes were intermarried with some of the most prominent families of the time, including the Waterfords, Devonshires, Pembrokes and Abercorns. In 1883 the family boasted one of the largest land holdings in Ireland with over 121,000 acres across six counties and a further 21,000 acres in England.³⁶ The estimated yearly income from all the landholdings came to over £62,000. It is little wonder that the match was greeted with such enthusiasm by Elizabeth’s father when he

²⁹ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 25 Aug. 1886 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

³⁰ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, Mar. 1887 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

³¹ *Ibid.*; see also, Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers*, p. 48.

³² Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 22 Jan. 1890 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

³³ Ismay Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 13 May 1868 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44, 422/6);

³⁴ Gladys Hamilton to Lady Fanny Wicklow, 1 Jun. 1908 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3));

³⁵ Ralph Wicklow to Lady Fanny Wicklow, 1 Jun. 1908 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

³⁶ Bateman, *Great landowners*, p. 259.

stated: ‘such a family to enter...one could not wish more for little Elise [Elizabeth].’³⁷ While the match epitomised the attraction of wealth, power and social standing, the suitability of Henry Petty-FitzMaurice on a more personal level was also a consideration: ‘he is such a gentleman, and clever on many subjects – very keen sportsman and yet interested in other matters.’³⁸ The evidence contained in family papers suggests that much of the vetting of potential grooms was carried out through the careful networking established by women.³⁹

However, when it came to selecting a marriage partner, aristocratic girls had a greater say in who they would marry than perhaps previous research has acknowledged. Much of the correspondence from mothers and female friends pay particular attention to the happiness of a prospective bride and her likely contentment with her future husband. Lady Ettie Desborough discouraged her daughter Monica’s friendship with Maurice Fitzgerald, 6th duke of Leinster, who had displayed signs of a nervous condition when he attended weekend gatherings held by the Desboroughs.⁴⁰ Having lost both his parents at a young age, Maurice suffered with epilepsy and spent his life from 1909 confined in an asylum in Edinburgh.⁴¹ Conditions such as epilepsy were little understood, and frequently sufferers were shut away behind closed doors, while family members remained tight-lipped. Lady Desborough set her eyes instead on Desmond, Maurice’s younger brother, as a more likely candidate and should anything happen to Maurice, potentially the next duke. Unfortunately, Monica did not concur with her mother and the relationship remained no more than one of firm friendship which ultimately ended with Desmond’s untimely death during the Great War in 1916.⁴² Enquiry was evidently made to ensure that no unexpected dark secret would come to light to tarnish an otherwise prime candidate.

³⁷ Sir Edward Stanley Hope to Constance Leslie, 11 Oct. 1903 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/32 Folder 5).

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ See Thompson, *The rise of respectable society*, p. 103; Jessica Gerard, *Country house life, family and servants, 1815-1914* (Oxford, 1994), pp 80-6; Sawyer, *We are but women*, pp 34-5.

⁴⁰ Richard Davenport-Hines, *Ettie the intimate life and dauntless spirit of Lady Desborough*, (London, 2008) p.127.

⁴¹ Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesci (Somerset Heritage Centre, DD/DRU 90); see also, Terence Dooley, *The decline and fall of the Dukes of Leinster* (Dublin, 2014), pp 143-166; Michael Estorick, *Heirs & graces* (London, 1981).

⁴² Estorick, *Heirs & graces*, p.127.

The preamble to marriage: Ralph Wicklow & Gladys Hamilton

The relationship between Ralph Howard and Gladys Hamilton is an example of a brief engagement that also clearly demonstrates the function of female family members in the selection of suitors.⁴³ Having been invited for a weekend at Baronscourt in Co. Tyrone, the seat of the Abercorns, Ralph wrote to his mother in September 1901 that ‘they do not seem to want me to go away yet’, and while his enthusiasm to linger may in part have been due to the entertainment and leisure activities on offer – hunting, sailing, dining, and the company of ‘amusing people’- his relationship with Gladys had also blossomed.⁴⁴ Though it was not the first time Ralph had been a guest of the Abercorns, it was around this time that Gladys commenced writing to Ralph though she knew her mother would not approve.⁴⁵ They contrived meetings whenever they could, feeling it was like being ‘at school ticking off the day’s till the holidays.’⁴⁶ In late October 1901, Ralph, who was serving in the Kings Life Guards, based in London, bumped into Gladys and her father at a play in the city, though he admitted it was ‘not altogether by chance on my part.’⁴⁷ He had intended to arrange a supper party after the play, but had to abandon his plans when the duke asked him to return to the theatre to find Gladys’ mislaid fan. When Ralph eventually returned empty-handed, the Abercorns were gone: ‘I don’t know whether he did it on purpose or not, but I was pretty cross’, he told his mother.⁴⁸ Ralph asked his mother to invite the Abercorns ‘to Shelton sometime early in December’.⁴⁹ A few days later, he was invited to dinner by Gladys’ cousin, Lady Beatrice Rawson. Having secured a brief moment or two alone with Gladys he proposed and to his dismay she declined. Worse still, he had to continue with the evening at the Rawson home and sit through dinner, followed by a play at the theatre without the opportunity to discuss the matter with Gladys. Lady Rawson, however, invited him to call to her home the following morning. What followed was to all intents and purposes an interview concerning his financial means and other matters including ‘that previous affair’, of which there is no further evidence. Evidently satisfied, Lady Rawson instructed Ralph to go upstairs, and propose to Gladys again. Obviously Ralph’s appearance at Gladys’ door was a pre-arranged signal

⁴³ See N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/1-13 (1-6).

⁴⁴ Ralph Wicklow to Lady Wicklow, 12 Sept. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁴⁵ Gladys Hamilton to Ralph Wicklow, 14 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/13).

⁴⁶ Ralph Wicklow to Gladys Hamilton, 4 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606//9).

⁴⁷ Ralph Wicklow to Lady Wicklow, 22 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

that he had been approved of and this time his proposal was accepted.⁵⁰ Gladys had clearly confided in her cousin and chose to seek her counsel in relation to marriage, rather than that of her mother. Aileen Purdon Coote similarly confided in Eva, the cousin of Arthur Maxwell, Lord Farnham, about her and Arthur's blossoming relationship. Eva wrote to Arthur in 1903 when she heard that the couple were engaged stating that 'I was so dreadfully afraid it wouldn't come off and simply longed to tell you how much in love she was with you, but now it is all right and I am so happy for both of you.'⁵¹

The role of family matriarchs proved vital for the smooth passage of a couple's relationship into marriage. Ralph eagerly wrote to his mother, stating that 'Gladys and I are engaged. Don't say anything about it yet though, as the Duchess is in Ireland and we have not yet got her consent'.⁵² Once this was no longer an issue he obeyed social convention by writing to his future mother-in-law. Mary Hamilton, duchess of Abercorn in reply wrote: 'your letter which I received this morning has touched me very, very much and I like so much all you say. I confess to you I was very much taken by surprise when I got Hamby's [her husband James Hamilton's] telegram.....! if you will make her happy and take care of her that is all I ask, for I don't think even you – can realize all she is to me.'⁵³ Similarly Gladys wrote to Fanny Howard, the countess of Wicklow. In reply Lady Wicklow stated 'there cannot be a luckier boy in the world than he is in having won you, and I know that there is not a happier one!'⁵⁴ She added reassuringly that 'all the people here are so pleased about it.'⁵⁵ The acceptance of Ralph's choice of bride was important not alone to the family but also to the tenantry and extended community of the Wicklows. Lady Wicklow continued: 'Be nice and good to him always, I think you do love him; he loves you with all his heart and I have no fear, but that he will always do so. I wonder if I am wrong in thinking that if once a man really loves a woman, it depends upon herself whether he remains her love all his life or not.'⁵⁶ Lady Abercorn, delighted with the news, had immediately set about writing to most of the family informing them of the engagement and assuring everyone: 'how happy all are here about our little

⁵⁰ Ralph Wicklow to Lady Wicklow, 25 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁵¹ Eva to Arthur Maxwell, 18 Jun. 1903 (Cavan Co. Archives, Farnham Papers, P25/7)

⁵² Ralph Wicklow to Lady Wicklow, 25 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁵³ Mary Abercorn to Ralph Wicklow, 28 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 28,606/8).

⁵⁴ Lady Wicklow to Gladys Hamilton, 2 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁵⁵ Ibid.

⁵⁶ Ibid.

arrangement'⁵⁷ Ralph's maiden aunts, Caroline, Alice and Louisa Howard, wrote to Gladys offering their congratulations: 'We shall welcome you with much love for his sake, and hope and trust you may be happy in your new life and home and among us all.'⁵⁸ Alice Howard complimented Ralph on his choice: 'it is such a pleasure to us to think you are going to have such nice brothers and sisters.'⁵⁹ It was not the first time that an Abercorn had married a Wicklow; Ralph's great grandmother, Sarah Hamilton, had married the 3rd earl, William Howard.

However, it was not just the family's approval that was important to the couple. Some friends teased the happy couple: 'how many little broken hearts there will be ... I have lost a lot of money over this as I have got to send [some to] Lady Susan [Beresford].'⁶⁰ Ralph's cousin Isa Boyd wrote: 'I quite approve of your choice, which is a very important matter! Don't kill your young lady in your motor.'⁶¹ Those on the periphery were also important for the couple and they shared comments and stories of the breaking news. According to Gladys, 'one of the gardeners told Phyllis today that he thought "I was very clever to catch you"!! You poor old thing, fancy getting catch [sic] by such a designing little beast!!'⁶² Even Dan, the old coachman told Gladys 'he was really proud of her!'⁶³ Her father on the other hand was 'very excited at the thoughts of who he is going to ask to the wedding – it strikes me there won't be much room for you and me'.⁶⁴ It is little wonder that Mary Abercorn took measures to ensure the marriage was arranged swiftly and faultlessly.

After only briefing over all the 'pros and cons' and have come to the conclusion that there will be a lot less fuss and better if you were married in London than if you were married here. Hamly in the warmest of his heart would ask all the objectionable neighbours who would make a point of getting drunk ... I advise you therefore to be very firm with H. about being married early in January ... all the relations would gladly offer their houses

⁵⁷ Ralph Howard to Gladys Hamilton, 29 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/9).

⁵⁸ Caroline Howard to Gladys Hamilton, 31 Oct. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁵⁹ Alice Howard to Ralph Howard, 4 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/13).

⁶⁰ Unknown to Gladys Hamilton, n.d. (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11 (1-3)).

⁶¹ Ida Boyd to Ralph Howard, n.d. (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/13).

⁶² Gladys Hamilton to Ralph Howard, n.d. (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/13).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Gladys Hamilton to Ralph Howard, 11 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/13).

for a couple of days and then go over to Shelton She is a very dear little girl and I don't like the idea of giving her up to even you! One little bit!!⁶⁵

Negotiations regarding the legal and financial arrangements were settled between Ralph and the Hamilton's solicitors with haste and by 20 November he wrote that the duke's allowance to his daughter was settled at £200 per year during his life, with a fortune of £8,000 payable on the duke's death.⁶⁶ Ralph similarly made provision for Gladys and any children from the marriage as part of the overall settlement.⁶⁷

Christmas was spent at Baronscourt where the two families, Hamiltons and Howards, celebrated the festive season, just weeks before the nuptials. Lady Wicklow was instructed to 'bring up any amount of things to choose from for Christmas presents. They can all go back again you know, that are not wanted...bring any amount of stuff, it is much better to have too much than too little'.⁶⁸ Eager to make a good impression to his future in-laws, Ralph seems to have little regard for the fact that he expected his mother to shop in Dublin and travel north by train with all the provisions. Early in the new year wedding presents began arriving including a pearl collar (which Gladys wore as her sole adornment on her wedding day) presented by the citizens of Derry.⁶⁹

Gladys's ambition was that she would be all that Ralph wanted her to be: 'I pray to God that I may make you as happy as you deserve to be, and I hope you may never, never have cause to regret the day you asked me to be your wife.'⁷⁰ Ralph on the other hand was more concerned in getting an engagement ring and selecting one Gladys would approve of: 'How nice it will be to see it there my very dear little girl'.⁷¹ One gift delivered to the Abercorn's London home was a cradle which Mary Abercorn perceived as displaying a great deal of 'thought and foresight!'⁷² Initially excited by all the attention, Gladys

⁶⁵ Lady Mary Abercorn to Ralph Howard, 10 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/7).

⁶⁶ Ralph Howard to Lady Wicklow, 20 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/11 (1-3)).

⁶⁷ Ralph Howard to Lady Wicklow, 16 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/11 (1-3)). For the importance of marriage settlements see Malcomson, A.P.W. *The pursuit of the heiress: aristocratic marriage in Ireland, 1750-1820* (Antrim, 1982); H.J. Habakkuk, 'Marriage settlements in the eighteenth century' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. xxxii (1950), pp 15-30; Jalland, *Women marriage and politics, 1860-1914*, pp 58-72.

⁶⁸ Ralph Howard to Lady Wicklow, 20 Dec. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/11 (1-3)).

⁶⁹ Ralph Howard to Lady Wicklow, 1 Jan. 1902 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/11(1-3)); *The Irish Times*, 15 Jan. 1902.

⁷⁰ Gladys Hamilton to Ralph Howard, n.d. (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/13).

⁷¹ Ralph Howard to Gladys Hamilton, 1 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/9).

⁷² Lady Mary Abercorn to Ralph Howard, 10 Dec. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/13).

lamented that it was not ‘half the fun’ without Ralph, and the endless rounds of social engagements, dinners, luncheons, and trips for the trousseau (assembled by Switzer’s of Dublin), began to feel dull.⁷³ She noted one day that she had ‘been writing since breakfast and had an awful lot to write despite answering them when they arrived. I am looking forward to seeing you again but I think it’s a very good thing you are not here or I should never get through what I have to do.’⁷⁴

The marriage took place on 14 January 1902 at St. Mark’s Church, North Audley Street, Grosvenor Square, London to a ‘very large and fashionable assembly’.⁷⁵ The nine bridesmaids were presented with arum lilies and ‘unique broaches of green enamel and pearl shamrocks’ by the earl. Gladys’ dress consisted of Brussels lace, chiffon, and white satin. The list of wedding guests reads like a Who’s Who of the aristocracy while the gifts numbered over 500. Gladys received a gold and enamel bracelet from the prince and princess of Wales, a turquoise diamond bangle from the duke and duchess of Connaught and a diamond tiara, diamond bracelet and an emerald and diamond brooch presented by the earl of Wicklow to his bride.⁷⁶ The couple toured Europe and Egypt for their honeymoon.⁷⁷

While the engagement was short, only about three months, it was the norm at the time.⁷⁸ There was no need to wait as both parties had been vetted by their prospective in-laws, in particular Ralph. At twenty-five, Ralph was a title holder with a family seat at Shelton Abbey in Co. Wicklow and an estate of over 28,000 acres. Additionally, he also had an established military career. Gladys at twenty-two, came from one of the most prestigious families in Ireland, was everything that a peer could wish for in a wife. She was a devoted daughter, with a keen understanding of the role she had to play after marriage. Significantly, the planning which culminated in the wedding was conducted by women, from the ‘coming out’, the chaperoning, selection of the right people to invite for weekends, and after the engagement, all the arrangements concerned with the wedding. The duchess of Abercorn took the lead and informed family members by writing of the

⁷³ Gladys Hamilton to Ralph Howard, n.d. (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/13); *Irish Times*, 15 Jan. 1902.

⁷⁴ Gladys Hamilton to Ralph Howard, 10 Dec. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/13).

⁷⁵ *Irish Times*, 15 Jan. 1902.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷⁷ Ralph Howard to Lady Wicklow, 20 Feb. 1902 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38, 606/11 (1-3)).

⁷⁸ See Horn, *Ladies of the manor*, p. 75.

engagement and forthcoming nuptials. Protocol was also adhered to in that both parties (Gladys and Ralph) had to write to their prospective mother-in-laws, but also the wider female family relations. Other than their input into the marriage settlement between the bride and groom, male family members had very little say in the planning. Even the duchess had the final say in where the marriage would be held, and this decision was contrary to what her husband's preferred choice would have been.⁷⁹ Overall, Gladys relied heavily on the support, and planning of her female relations during a period which was her final step into adulthood. The adherence to duty and family were very apparent throughout.

Motherhood

Marriage was the pinnacle of a woman's life serving as it did as an indicator of respectability within the social structure. This status was only surpassed once a woman became a mother. Childbirth and the provision of an heir were part of the ideal aristocratic woman's life and for a newly-married woman the evidence suggests that their first consideration was securing the family line.⁸⁰ Upon her marriage, Augusta Crofton, later Lady Clonbrock, received congratulations from her friend Sue who advised Augusta to: 'have a few more sons and less daughters...for really 8 daughters are too many.'⁸¹ This jibe refers to the fact that Luke Dillon, later Baron Clonbrock and Augusta's husband, had eight sisters before his arrival. As Anita Leslie pointed out: 'females were wanted in very small quantities by the upper classes. They had to be married off and that cost money.'⁸² Clodagh Anson said of her grandmother, Christiana Beresford, marchioness of Waterford: 'it was a good thing that she never had a girl, as she seemed to hate women, and was always very bitter about them.'⁸³ This seems to have stemmed from her father's resentment that she had not been a male. Christiana used to proclaim loudly at house-parties: 'I have produced five sons, and yet I've only got one grandson' followed by a severe stare at her daughter-in-law Lady Blanche Beresford, who had managed to produce only one son and two daughters.⁸⁴ The evidence suggests that the duty of producing sons as soon as possible after a marriage was an imperative. An examination of the dates of

⁷⁹ See Mary Abercorn to Ralph Howard, 10 Nov. 1901 (N.L.I. Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/7).

⁸⁰ See Horn, *Ladies of the manor*, pp 90-102; Hill, *Women in Ireland a century of change*.

⁸¹ Sue to Lady Clonbrock, 31 Oct. 1875 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 792 (2)).

⁸² Leslie, *The gilt and the gingerbread*, p. 88.

⁸³ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 24.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

marriages and the birth date of the first child shows that most women had a child within the first two years of marriage, and a large number had their first child within the first year, including Augusta Dillon, Baroness Clonbrock, Lady Edith Mahon, Elizabeth Alexander, countess of Caledon, Elizabeth Conyngham, Marchioness Conyngham, Jemima Bligh, countess of Darnley, Lady Mary de Ross, Frances Hely Hutchinson, countess of Donoughmore and her daughter-in-law, Elena Hely Hutchinson, countess of Donoughmore, and Florence Wyndham-Quin, countess of Dunraven, amongst others. There were exceptions: Lady Evelyn Vesey had her first and only child after seventeen years of marriage, and Daisy Plunkett, countess of Fingall had to wait nine years before her first child, Mary, was born in 1892.⁸⁵ However, difficulties with fertility were not discussed in the private letters of women at the time nor, indeed, were matters relating to contraception. The aristocracy remained entrenched in its views regarding duty and the role of women. As F.L.M. Thompson has argued, wives remained ‘un-emancipated,’ dutiful to the roles into which they had been socialised.⁸⁶

The elation at the birth of a son is evidenced in family papers. Anita Leslie recalled how her grandmother Leonie had driven around the estate distributing packets of tea to tenants, and how ‘bonfires were lit to celebrate Jack’s birth – all because he was a boy!’⁸⁷ Indeed, celebrations of her brother’s birth lingered causing ‘jealousy, frustration and resentment.’⁸⁸ For the mothers however, it was a time of joy and fulfilment. Aileen Maxwell, Baroness Farnham had her wishes come true when her son was born in 1905 and her friend, Ida Blackley, wrote to her: ‘I’m so very glad and I know how awfully happy you must feel.’⁸⁹ Another friend writing to Arthur Leslie commented that the dowager must be ‘so delighted, and I have no doubt she will spoil him almost as much as any mother does her little grandson.’⁹⁰ Others put it plainly: ‘I am so glad it is a boy’ or, we ‘are so glad to hear how virile you are’ and numerous letters contain copious references to ‘a son and heir.’⁹¹ The following year Aileen had a daughter Marjory followed by a second daughter, Verena, in 1907. After Verena’s birth, Arthur’s

⁸⁵ See *Burkes Peerage and Baronetage* (var. editions); see also, Horn, *High society*, p. 92 regarding conception rates amongst the British peerage.

⁸⁶ Thompson, *The rise of respectable society, 1830-1900*, p. 63.

⁸⁷ Leslie, *The gilt and the gingerbread*, p. 29.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Ida Blackley to Aileen Farnham, 20 Jan. 1905 (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11).

⁹⁰ Lallie to Arthur Farnham, 10 Feb. 1905 (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11).

⁹¹ Isabel Clayton to Arthur Farnham, n.d. (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11). Aunt Helena to Arthur Farnham, n.d. (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11).

grandmother Charlotte Maxwell wrote: 'I am so pleased that it is another girl for they will be such a dear little companion by and by just like twins...I always think that for girls it more essential to be near of an age for all their early life they are together.'⁹² However, Arthur's sister, Stella wrote: 'I am glad Aileen is over it safely and hope she is not very disappointed it's not a son,' while another friend, Eva, felt Aileen would be 'rather disappointed' with a girl.⁹³

While sons were required to sustain family bloodlines, it is evident that once heirs had been produced, many women yearned for daughters. Having produced four sons, Leonie Leslie was encouraged by her sister-in-law to 'aim' for daughters.⁹⁴ Unfortunately there was no advice as to how this was to be achieved! Lady Lucretia Preston, however, was very pragmatic when her daughter, the Hon. Lucretia Farrell, had safely delivered her fifth son in 1872 having lost her only daughter the previous year tragically after falling from a balcony. Despite hoping for a girl her mother wisely pronounced: 'one must be thankful to Providence when mother and child are all right'.⁹⁵ Lady Lucretia eventually had another daughter, Mary, and she comforted herself that she already had 'an angel in heaven.'⁹⁶

Pregnancy and childbirth

It is clear from the personal letters of many of these women that they were supportive of one another during the stages of pregnancy and childbirth. This is understandable given that childbirth could sometimes prove fatal to mother and child, or result in the depleted health of the mother. Advice undoubtedly proved vital for new mothers-to-be, as the assumption is that knowledge regarding the reproductive cycle was very much hit or miss, depending on one's confidants and their knowledge and ability to discuss such issues. Mary Crawshay advised Lady Constance Leslie: 'do take care of yourself and do not miscarry again – it is a bad habit.'⁹⁷ To this end sisters and friends who were already mothers provided whatever advice they had found helpful. Lady Eileen Preston found

⁹² C. Maxwell to Arthur Farnham, 6 Aug. (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11).

⁹³ Stella Maxwell to Arthur Farnham, 6 Aug. 1907 (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11); Eva to Arthur Farnham, 6 Aug. (Cavan Co. Archives, P25/11).

⁹⁴ Mary Crawshay to Leonie Leslie, 26 Jan. 1894 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44).

⁹⁵ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 21 Aug. 1872 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

⁹⁶ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 20 Jul. 1871 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

⁹⁷ Mary Crawshay to Constance Leslie, n.d. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/31); see also, Jalland and Hooper, *Women from birth to death*, pp 139-141.

the support of her friend, Holly, invaluable: ‘she is so sympathetic over my “condition” having so lately been in the same straits herself.’⁹⁸ Lady Constance Leslie was advised to be ‘careful not to over-exert yourself in any way and if you suffer from pain in your back you should lie down a good deal and also sponge your back with vinegar and cold water every morning.’⁹⁹ Her sister admitted that she herself had ‘never suffered from distress’ but that it ‘must be very disagreeable- it very often goes off at about the middle of the time.’¹⁰⁰ Lady Augusta Dillon was advised later in pregnancy to ‘get into a boiling bath of ½ an hour every night.’¹⁰¹

Mothers and mothers-in-law were also providers of support and advice. Lady Georgina Preston’s concern for her daughter Ismay occupied much of her time particularly when she was ‘in for a baby again’.¹⁰² Evidently Ismay suffered considerably with morning sickness in previous pregnancies though Lady Georgina was hopeful that it would, ‘mend at the end of three months, as it is wretched for her’.¹⁰³ While symptoms such as morning sickness were for the most part taken in their stride, it is difficult to ascertain how women actually felt about pregnancy. Ismay already had four children by her first husband Lord Ninian Crichton-Stuart, before she became pregnant with her second husband’s first child. Certainly the need to produce an heir for her second husband was important enough to go through pregnancy again. Lady Eileen Preston had been seriously ill with septic poisoning after the birth of her first child, her only daughter, and as a result suffered from debilitating insomnia.¹⁰⁴ She noted to her husband that they had much for which to be thankful and reminisced that she had had ‘an awful feeling one day that it was all up – when I sent for old Pare Delany – and never did I so cling to life and long to live. Life with my perfect old “usbing” and our tiny girl in our beautiful home seemed the most heavenly thing to be desired.’¹⁰⁵ So concerned was Georgina regarding Eileen’s continuous health problems that she advised her son during his wife’s third pregnancy that Lady Eileen should have no more babies.¹⁰⁶ Robert Preston was born safely in 1915

⁹⁸ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 26 Apr. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

⁹⁹ Letter to Constance Leslie, 13 Feb. 1857 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/31).

¹⁰⁰ Ibid; see also, Jalland and Hooper, *Women from birth to death*, pp 124-35; Jalland, *Women, marriage and politics, 1860-1914*, pp 133-58.

¹⁰¹ Letter to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792(2)).

¹⁰² Georgina Gormanston to Eileen Preston 14 Jul. 1917 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Letter to Eileen Gormanston, 17 Oct. 1913 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,428/1-2).

¹⁰⁵ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 6 Sept. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

¹⁰⁶ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 5 Sept. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

and having taken a break for a couple of years, Lady Gormanston had her fourth and final child in 1920.

According to Lady Lucretia Preston, as far as women's health was concerned: 'mama's have more experience.'¹⁰⁷ It was probably for this reason, combined with the security of home, that many women returned to their parental home for their confinement. Lady Theodosia Bagot stayed with her mother at Glaslough in Co. Monaghan during the final weeks of her first pregnancy in 1886. Lady Constance wrote: 'I already feel the pangs and labour of grand-motherhood! She [her daughter] is so cheery over it ... and so blessedly healthy and well thank God – which gives me courage'¹⁰⁸ Fortunately, Dorothy Bagot was born safely just two weeks later and both mother and child were healthy. Having no mother to turn to, Clodagh Anson returned from Texas, where her husband had a ranch, to London to be near her sister, before she gave birth to her first child in 1902.¹⁰⁹ Eileen Preston, Viscountess Gormanston went to her mother, Lady Butler, at her home in Bansha, Co. Tipperary where Lady Eileen found the atmosphere tranquil and restful. During this time, Lady Gormanston's husband, Jenico, the 15th viscount, was serving in the army and frequently away from home in both Dublin and Tipperary. The insomnia that plagued her during her previous two pregnancies continued with her third confinement, causing her to remark: 'this little brute (mannikin!) is treating me rather badly – bad nights, constant sick feeling and energy nil. Cheery isn't it? If only I were religious I might be offering it for my and other people's sins and gaining merit; but as it is, it's all wasted.'¹¹⁰ Her husband was sympathetic and relied on Lady Butler's letters to inform him of his wife's progress.¹¹¹ 'Oh what a time you must have had' he wrote, 'the only consolation is that it is over now. It is curious you should have a worst time with No. 3 than with No. 2. However, one can never tell in these things I suppose.'¹¹² Jenico's appreciation for his wife is evident in his declaration to her that 'I don't deserve a hundredth part of your goodness and sweetness to me.... I have had some rotten nights, but what is that compared to what you have gone through for me.'¹¹³ As evidenced in family papers, husbands appear quite supportive of their wives during this period and did

¹⁰⁷ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, n.d. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

¹⁰⁸ Constance Leslie to Maria Louise Rame, 23 Jun. 1886 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/34).

¹⁰⁹ Anson, *Victorian days*, pp 201-2.

¹¹⁰ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 12 May (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

¹¹¹ Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 7 Dec. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/9).

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 15 Jul. 1920 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/4).

worry about their safety during pregnancy and confinement. However, it was to other women that wives turned for emotional and physical support during this time.

Children

Anita Leslie claimed that ‘mothers might see their little ones once a day, the fathers about once a year.’¹¹⁴ However, women appear not to have been the aloof mothers that we have been led to believe.¹¹⁵ There is substantial evidence that many aristocratic mothers were warm, caring and involved in every aspect of their children’s lives. While quite a lot of a mother’s time was spent amongst adults rather than children, a practice facilitated by the employment of nurses and nursery staff, women were involved with their children and had a strong love for them, expressed over and over in letters. Susie Steinbach argues that one should not be deceived by a lack of physical labour by mothers ‘for absence of physical or emotional intimacy.’¹¹⁶ Perhaps much of the notion regarding distant or neglectful mothers may stem from the fact that women were less likely to nurse their children. Clodagh Anson for example never dreamt of nursing her children and she was certain her mother never did either.¹¹⁷ But this did not mean that she did not care deeply for the welfare of her children. In 1902 Clodagh had to leave her first child, in the care of her sister-in-law at Curraghmore, to return to Texas to her husband’s ranch. She lamented that ‘it was dreadful to leave her, when she was eight months old, and just beginning to be interesting’¹¹⁸ After five months’ absence, the Ansons returned to Ireland: ‘I could hardly bear to live through the few hours till I got to Curraghmore.’¹¹⁹ Clodagh never did return to Texas, despite her husband returning there each winter until he sold the ranch. Instead she preferred to remain with her children and use the time to visit with family and friends.¹²⁰ Ethel O’Brien, Baroness Inchiquin spent many summer breaks at various seaside towns in Co. Clare in the company of her children, taking them on trips to surrounding sights, swimming, fishing, playing in rock pools and relaxing. Lady Ethel appears to have suffered with her nerves, and other bouts of illness all of which could

¹¹⁴ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 22.

¹¹⁵ See, Horn, *High society*, pp 53-7; Thompson, *The rise of respectable society*, pp 124-7.

¹¹⁶ Steinbach, *Women in England, 1760-1914*, p. 83; see also, Gerard, *Country house life, family and servants*, 1815-1914, p. 65.

¹¹⁷ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 267.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 201-2.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 229.

have been associated with pregnancy.¹²¹ She had six children between 1897 and 1910.¹²² Lucius did not accompany the family on these trips but Lady Ethel revelled in being by the sea. Similarly, Clodagh Anson and her children used to take a house in Ardmore, Co. Waterford each summer where she, her children, dogs and the family donkey spent days by the seaside.¹²³ Her children revelled in the fact that they ‘could actually catch fish in their hands’ in the rock pools on the beach.¹²⁴ When separated from their children, letters, drawings and scribbles were exchanged and expected by parents.¹²⁵ These highlight three things: firstly the socialisation of children from an early age, their introduction to the etiquette surrounding letter-writing, and thirdly, as a means of strengthening bonds between children and their parents.¹²⁶ It is clear that the attachments between mother and children remained strong throughout their lives as evidenced by the array and frequency of letters between parent and children of both genders.¹²⁷

Concern for the health of children also supports the fact that women were caring and considerate mothers; there was much discussion about health in women’s correspondence. Lady Ethel Inchiquin was preoccupied with her son Sonny’s dental appointments while Phaedrig had constant problems with his chest and nose. During medical appointments in London she treated her children to an array of activities such as plays, pantomimes, exhibitions and the like.¹²⁸ Similarly Lady Hermione Fitzgerald delighted in her children but worried about their health and education constantly. Having spent some time at Abbeyleix with the de Vesce family, Lady Hermione was glad to hear that ‘Kildare is looking stronger and wiser.’¹²⁹ When the children received a pony she wrote: ‘Kildare will triumph, tempered by timidity and Des with an impervious courage

¹²¹ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 23 Feb. 1898 (N.L.I. Inchiquin Papers, MS 45/540/1).

¹²² Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 9 Jun. (N.L.I. Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,540/1)

¹²³ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 217.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 30 July (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,540/1).

¹²⁶ Clonbrock Papers (N.L.I. MS 35,795(11)); Wicklow Papers (N.L.I. MS 38,606); Louth Papers (N.L.I. MS 40,099/15); Inchiquin Papers (N.L.I. MS 45,475).

¹²⁷ Clonbrock Papers (N.L.I. MS 35,785), Gormanston Papers (N.L.I., MS 44, 426); Doneraile Papers (N.L.I., MS 34,160); Castletown Papers (N.L.I. MS 35,295); Leslie Papers (N.L.I. MS 49,495); Inchiquin Papers (N.L.I. MS 45,502); Howard Bury Papers (Westmeath Co. Archives, G/15). See also, Somerville and Ross, *Irish memories*, p. 73; Gerard, *Country house life, family and servants, 1815-1914*, p. 72.

¹²⁸ See Inchiquin Papers (N.L.I. MS 45,540/1); see also, Horn, *Ladies of the manor*, pp 98-100; Jalland, *Women marriage and politics, 1860-1914*, pp 180-4.

¹²⁹ Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d. (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90). DD/DRU 90).

which as he has no notion of sticking on, fills me with alarm!’¹³⁰ Indeed all indications are that Hermione understood intimately the personalities of her sons. Lady Edith Mahon was quite perturbed by any illness which occurred to her children though it was not without cause, as her eldest son William died when just over a year old in 1910.¹³¹ This was followed by the sudden death of her seven-year-old daughter, Mary, in 1918 having had a seizure on her mother’s knee while in the company of the doctor.¹³² She wrote: ‘she is lying in the little green dressing room. I carried her there last night.... I realize and feel nothing now...I can’t think how tomorrow is to be faced’¹³³ Others perhaps found the transition into motherhood more of a challenge and were ill prepared. Clodagh Anson admitted her nanny ‘had a very poor opinion’ of her ‘motherly instinct ever since the time that I had interviewed her first.’¹³⁴ Her first born was a month old when she interviewed the nanny. When asked what the baby was fed, Clodagh had replied ‘lime-water’ simply because there was a bottle sitting on a shelf in the nursery. Evidently Clodagh was not feeding the baby herself, nor was she present when the child was fed. In her defence, Clodagh was the youngest of her family and she claimed she had never even ‘seen a small baby until I had one myself.’¹³⁵

Mothers frequently played a significant role when it came to the succession of a son after the death of the title holder. In 1876, when Edward Preston the 13th viscount Gormanston died, his widow Lady Lucretia found herself ensuring that the titles and estates were handed over to her son, despite the fact that he was forty years old. She wrote to her son that she had ‘sent the certificates of my marriage, your birth and your father’s death to Sir Bernard, and now he sends my copies of them and all of which I am to sign, also a declaration that Ed Preston I married was afterwards Ld G: and that you are my son. What humbug!! He must be trying to make a penny out of you as he did your father.’¹³⁶ She later added that the barrister was also requesting the family patent of the English peerage, evidently to ensure the correct legal practice was upheld and that the succeeding heir was

¹³⁰ Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, 10 Nov., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce, DD/DRU 90).

¹³¹ Edith Mahon to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

¹³² Edith Mahon to Augusta Clonbrock, Nov. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

¹³³ Ibid.

¹³⁴ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 266-7.

¹³⁵ Ibid., p. 266-7.

¹³⁶ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 10 Feb. 1877 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2); it is unclear if Lucretia is referring to Sir Bernard Burke (1814-1892), the genealogist, barrister and keeper of records at Dublin Castle. See Dictionary of Irish biography, available at dib.cambridge.org [15 Mar. 2016].

added to the register of hereditary peers. To support such legalities many families kept stringent records relating to their family genealogy. Lady Georgina Preston spent several months in 1897 putting such documents in order and locating the volumes of the Gormanston pedigree, some of which were kept at the family solicitors, others were maintained by her mother-in-law Lucretia and stored in an old box at Gormanston while other documents concerning the Manor Rights of Preston were in the Birmingham Tower in Dublin.¹³⁷

Such diligence on the part of matriarchs may appear obsessive; there was a clear reasoning for it. In 1918, for example the Waterfords were threatened by a claimant to the title of marquess which resulted in a prominent court case. The claimant, George Tooth, petitioned the court that he had been born to the 5th marquess and his wife, Lady Florence Grosvenor Vivian, in 1873 and upon the death of the marchioness several days after her confinement he had been hidden away. In truth, Lady Waterford did give birth in March of 1873 to a stillborn child who was eventually buried with its mother at Curraghmore. In court witnesses testified to the fact that George's mother was a sister of the Waterford's cook, and she gave birth to a child in the local workhouse. When the child's mother died, Lady Waterford took pity and had the baby removed from the workhouse and placed in the care of a woman whom she paid for his maintenance. After Lady Waterford's death, the marquess continued providing for the child until he was of an age to provide for himself. The court found that George Tooth had no claim to the marquessate of Waterford, either legitimate or illegitimate and the case was ultimately dismissed.¹³⁸ Almost fifty years earlier in 1870 the Wicklows also found the earldom under dispute, this time from a Mrs Ellen Howard, widow of William George Howard nephew of the 4th earl. She claimed her son was the rightful heir to the estate, her husband being dead and the 4th earl having died without male issue.¹³⁹ The court was unconvinced particularly as the normal evidence used to prove birth was not available: there was no doctor or nurse able to give testimony, the child's existence had not been made public until several months after the birth and no evidence was available of either birth registration or baptism. Indeed, testimony had been provided by the defence team of

¹³⁷ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 22 Sept. 1897 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 42,424/5); Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 6 Oct. 1897 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers MS, 42,424/5).

¹³⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 9 Feb. 1918.

¹³⁹ *Irish Times*, 19 Mar. 1870.

Charles Francis Arnold Howard the 5th earl who succeeded his uncle in 1865, that Mrs Hamilton had obtained a child from the union workhouse in order to make a claim to the title. The court ‘concluded by formally giving judgement for Charles Francis Arnold’ and Mrs Howard’s case was deemed one of ‘perjury and conspiracy.’¹⁴⁰

Lady Georgina Gormanston fended off a slightly different threat to the family titles in 1915 when it was proposed that Lord Aberdeen would receive an Irish title having worked tirelessly in Ireland during his lord lieutenantancy in 1886 and 1905-15. The title which he himself proposed was Tara, which perturbed the Preston family in Co. Meath, as this was an unused title belonging to their extended family. The viscounty of Tara had been created in 1650 for Thomas Preston, youngest son of Christopher, the 4th viscount. The title had ceased with Thomas’ grandson’s death, in 1674.¹⁴¹ Lady Georgina’s opposition was based on the fact that the title was extant rather than extinct and as the Preston family was large it was ‘possible that there may be claimants.’¹⁴² She further stated that it was customary ‘when anyone asks for a title which has belonged to another family, to ask members of that family whether they have any objection to the title being taken.’¹⁴³ In this instance this courtesy had not been extended to the Preston family, though Lady Georgina was adamant that if any family members were in the future offered a peerage for services rendered, it would be the Tara title which would be revived. Influenced by his mother, Jenico initiated contact with Lord Aberdeen. Despite the fact that Lady Georgina had told him what exactly to write, she was annoyed that Jenico had addressed Lord Aberdeen by an incorrect title.¹⁴⁴ She noted: ‘I am much afraid you have cooked your goose by doing this. He certainly won’t be pleased. I wonder who suggested your doing this. I was so careful to put Marquess. Well it can’t be helped, but he will certainly think you ought to have known.’¹⁴⁵ Lord Aberdeen decided on Temair, an old Irish name for the Hill of Tara, as his title and he was created the marquess of Aberdeen and Temair in 1916.¹⁴⁶ Georgina felt that ‘the old man has been very civil and one is really very much obliged to him’, and she advised Jenico to write and thank the marquess for the decision

¹⁴⁰ *Irish Times*, 1 Apr. 1870.

¹⁴¹ John Debrett, *The Peerage of the United Kingdom and Great Britain and Ireland*, 9th Ed (London, 1814), p. 1168.

¹⁴² *Irish Times*, 25 Jan. 1915.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 5 Feb. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

¹⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁶ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 7 Feb. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

he had come to, his new title being ‘very suitable as commemorating [his] long connection with Ireland.’¹⁴⁷

Conclusion

Marriage amongst the aristocracy was a serious business. Unions were carefully considered, eligible candidates vetted, and while companionable arrangements were preferred, other factors such as good character, financial security, and a good name were highly prized. The role of women in this process was central with mothers taking ownership of all matters relating to courtship, engagements and marriage. Once married, the focus for women was to secure the family line. In matters relating to pregnancy and childbirth women relied on other women for support and advice. In fact, their reliance on one another continued during the formative years of their children with many women seeking advice from one another. Marriage and motherhood, were important periods of an aristocratic woman’s life where duty and responsibility came to the fore.

¹⁴⁷ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 7 Feb. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

Chapter 2: Marriage, scandal, and Irish aristocratic women

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries peers and their marriages increasingly came under scrutiny. The honourable traditions of the social hierarchy and prestige of the elites were considered weakened by external influences particularly ‘the increasing number of unions between hereditary peers and ladies of inferior station.’¹ The central focus of much criticism was the role of the woman in these unions. The *Throne* magazine for example, (‘a semi-official organ of the English royal court’) congratulated women for their ‘enterprise and ability’ though it viewed these marital arrangements as regrettable particularly where the children were concerned.² Gentlemen did not escape condemnation, often being labelled as traitors to their tradition. They were denounced for damaging and cheapening generations of ‘right breeding’ required for producing the leaders of the country.³ By sullyng blood lines privileged families were criticised for endangering their lineage, insulting the dignity of their class and their right to sit in the House of Lords.⁴ One New Zealand paper blamed the tone of the *Throne’s* article as having originated with Queen Mary (1867-1953) and ‘her circle of conservatism encrusted nobilities.’⁵

One of the most notable Irish marriages to fall into this bracket was that of the marquess of Headfort, Geoffrey Taylour and actress, Rose Boote. The Headforts were a prominent family of the Irish aristocracy, residing at Headfort House, Kells, Co. Meath. Owning almost 22,000 acres in 1883 across Meath and Cavan with a further 21,000 acres in England this was certainly a long way from Rose’s humble beginnings.⁶ She was born in 1878 in Luton, London to comedian father Charles Boote and his wife, Annie, a straw-hat maker. Rose took to the stage as an actress, perhaps inspired by her father’s career. Under her stage name Rosie, she achieved fame in the musical comedy shows of the Gaiety Theatre on the Strand.

¹ ‘Peers and Their Marriages: The First Preliminary to the Reform of the House of Lords Is to Prevent Hereditary Peers from Debasng Their Blood: This important question is the subject of the following special article’ in *The Throne*, 1913, available at <http://www.stagebeauty.net/th-frames.html?http&&www.stagebeauty.net/th-peerge.html> [17 Nov. 2014].

² *Ibid.*, [17 Nov. 2014]; see also, *NZ Truth*, 12 Apr. 1913.

³ ‘Peers and Their Marriages’ in *The Throne*, 1913, [17 Nov. 2014].

⁴ *Ibid.*, [17 Nov. 2014].

⁵ *NZ Truth*, 12 Apr. 1913.

⁶ Bateman, *Great Landowners of Great Britain & Ireland*, p. 125.

Geoffrey and Rose married at 8.30 am on 11 April 1901 at Saltwood Registry Office, near Folkestone, Kent. Perhaps in an effort to stem the outcry they knew their marriage would cause, the couple honeymooned at the Metropole Hotel, Folkestone, under their separate names.⁷ Despite the fact that the marriage announcement was published in the press weeks before, confirmation of the ceremony shocked society. Rose's affiliation to the Catholic church aside, it was the absence of class parity between the couple which caused scandal. It was social and career suicide for the marquess who had to resign his commission in the 1st Life Guards.⁸ The couple were ostracised from society for two years.⁹ A reprieve came by way of an invitation to a ball hosted by Constance, the duchess of Westminster in 1903.¹⁰ The *New York Times* reported:

The entrance of Lord Headfort and his wife was of course the sensation of the evening and in spite of what must have been a most trying ordeal, Lady Headfort bore herself in a manner which everyone declared to be perfect.... If anything her manners were better than those of the grande dames who crowded around her inquisitively.¹¹

One newspaper put Lady Rose's subsequent triumph down to the magnificent hunting grounds surrounding Headfort House, and stated that 'the presence of some of the most exclusive folk in the kingdom at their house parties is proof positive that the clever young marchioness has "arrived" in the fullest significance of that expressive term.'¹² The more plausible explanation for the Headfort's societal acceptance was that the duchess of Westminster and the marquess of Headfort were related. The former's maternal grandmother, Lady Olivia Tylour, was a sister of the 3rd marquess. The Headforts had been advised to withdraw quietly from society until proper re-introductions under the patronage and influence of the Westminsters could be made. This was done after 'her ladyship...presented her lord with an heir to his marquisate,' with Rose conquering 'the

⁷ 1901 UK Census available at Findmypast.co.uk [01 Feb. 2016]; *Worcestershire Chronicle*, 20 Apr. 1901.

⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 2 Mar. 1901; see also, Art Kavanagh, *The landed gentry and aristocracy Meath* (2013), p. 22; Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p. 94.

⁹ *The London Gazette*, 28 May 1901.

¹⁰ Eimear Walsh, 'Scandal in High Society' available at the National Library of Ireland, <http://www.nli.ie/blog/index.php/2011/07/18/scandal-in-high-society/> [17 Nov. 2014].

¹¹ *New York Times*, 2 Aug. 1903; see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p. 94.

¹² *Los Angeles Herald*, 4 Mar. 1906.

hearts of even the more exclusive section of society by both her natural charm of manner and her splendid vivacity of temperament.’¹³

Twelve years earlier, another gaiety girl married an Irish peer with a different outcome. Isabelle Maude Penrice Bilton, known as Belle took to the stage aged fourteen, performing along with her two sisters Flo and Violet. She quickly became a success and was much admired for her good looks. The Duc de Stacpoole remembered her dressed in pink attending a ball at the Freemasons Tavern in London and declared her the ‘beauty of the evening.’¹⁴ At the age of twenty-three Belle was in a relationship with Alden Carter Weston. She only discovered after he had been sent to prison for conspiracy to commit fraud that he was already married, but by this time she was expecting a child. Her son, Isidor, was born in 1888, and for a time she went by the name of Mrs Weston no doubt in a show of respectability. Early in 1889 she met William, Lord Dunlo, son of Richard, earl of Clancarty, at the Corinthian Club and after several months of courtship he sought his father’s permission to marry as he had not yet reached his majority. Unsurprisingly the earl, Richard Somerset Trench, refused.¹⁵

To the horror of his friends, Dunlo and Belle married in a registry office in July of that year. Dunlo was quickly persuaded by his father to take a six-month voyage to Australia, the intent being to separate the young couple. Lady Belle certainly believed this was the case and that Lord Clancarty was the instigator of certain rumours regarding her and a gentleman friend (Mr. Wertheimer) during her husband’s absence. George Lewis, a prominent solicitor to the aristocracy, acting on behalf of the Clancartys, wrote to Lord Dunlo informing him that Lady Dunlo’s activities with Wertheimer indicated infidelity.¹⁶ A petition for divorce was despatched by Mr Lewis, which he advised Dunlo to sign.¹⁷ Dunlo initially refused but was persuaded and as a consequence his debts were immediately settled by his father.¹⁸ During the court case Lady Dunlo acknowledged her child and her former lover but she strenuously denied all accusations of unfaithfulness to her husband. The trial dramatically ended when Dunlo declared his affection for his wife

¹³ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 1 Oct. 1903.

¹⁴ Duke de Stacpoole, *Irish and other memories* (London, 1922), p 85.

¹⁵ *Freemans Journal*, 29 July 1890; see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p. 94.

¹⁶ *Freemans Journal*, 29 July 1890; see also, Horn, *High society*, p. 90-1.

¹⁷ *Freemans Journal*, 29 July 1890.

¹⁸ *Irish Times*, 24 Jul. 1890.

and his belief in her faithfulness.¹⁹ Lady Belle returned to the stage to support herself and her financially embarrassed husband. One newspaper noted that she had no alternative as Dunlo's 'enraged father refused to recognise him, either financially or individually.'²⁰ The *Weekly Irish Times* commented that Lord Clancarty was 'a bit huffed at the result, but he did not behave fairly towards the wife of the heir to his property.'²¹ Lady Belle received some sympathy from the press particularly in America where one paper stated that she had 'made it a point to hold up to ridicule the 'cantankerous old man' her father-in-law, and Lady Clancarty, 'who refused to be put on the shelf as dowager countess.'²² The unsympathetic earl died the following year in 1891, but diverted all that he could from the estate and out of his son's ownership. While Lord Dunlo became the 5th earl, the following years were blighted by court cases eventually leading him to bankruptcy court. These legal tangles were initiated by the dowager countess in the defence of her husband's will of which she was sole executor.²³ Indeed, even when she died in 1911 the dowager left her estate to her spinster daughter and nothing to her only grandchildren, William and Belle's children.²⁴ Lady Belle was never really accepted by the wider British aristocracy though she was 'exceedingly popular in Ireland' where the couple spent most of their married life.²⁵ In 1893 at a Galway hunt ball hosted by the Master of the Hounds, Lord Clanmorris, the couple were shunned by some of the attendees.²⁶ When Lord and Lady Clancarty took to the floor to dance, several ladies who were on the floor promptly sat down. The Clancartys took their leave while the gentlemen present who 'resented the insult' shown to the Clancartys, gave their 'better halves...a bad quarter of an hour...when they got home.'²⁷ While this account is somewhat anecdotal, the Clancartys left Garbally after this episode for a considerable time. However, in 1904 one paper reported that Queen Alexandra specifically requested to meet Lady Clancarty during the royal visit to Ireland.²⁸ Lady Belle settled down to a quiet life on her husband's estate at Garbally Court

¹⁹ *Hull Daily Mail*, 1 Jan. 1907.

²⁰ *Indianapolis Journal*, 3 Feb. 1895.

²¹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 2 Aug. 1890.

²² *Indianapolis Journal*, 3 Feb. 1895.

²³ Probate calendars of England Wales, Rt. Hon earl of Clancarty, Richard Somerset, available at www.findmypast.co.uk [1 Feb. 2016].

²⁴ Probate Calendar, 1911, Rt. Hon. Adeliza Georgiana, dowager countess Clancarty, available at Findmypast.co.uk [1 Feb. 2016].

²⁵ *Dundee Courier*, 3 Jan. 1907.

²⁶ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 16 Jun. 1893. *Lisburn Herald*, 24 Jun. 1893.

²⁷ *Ibid.*; see also, *Leeds Mercury*, 3 Jan. 1907.

²⁸ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 1 Jan. 1907.

and ‘proved herself a model wife’ though she seldom ventured outside Ireland.²⁹ She had five children, all born between 1891 and 1902, including four sons, three of whom survived and a daughter. Lady Clancarty studied painting and languages and indulged in her love of horses.³⁰ She died prematurely in 1906 from cancer at her home aged forty-five years.

The differing reactions of society to Belle and Rosie can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, Belle’s lack of sexual innocence prior to her marriage contravened the strict ideal of female virtue. Her past entanglements were not only scandalous but unbecoming of a woman to be married to a peer. Additionally, the public disclosure of her private life can only have fuelled the Dunlo’s ostracisation of her, regardless of the public’s disapproval of Lord Clancarty’s stance. Secondly, duty towards family was highly prized among the aristocracy. Dunlo’s deliberate disobedience of his father’s wishes perhaps exacerbated public criticism. The Headforts did not have this problem as Geoffrey had reached his majority and his father was dead by the time he got married, so the issue did not arise to the same extent. Thirdly, the Headforts had notable patronage from extended family members while the Dunlos lacked any meaningful or influential support mechanisms. They had no one to minimise the social damage and turn their fortunes around. Fourthly, Belle was the first stage actress to marry into the Irish aristocracy, with the next of such marriages not occurring until the Headfort’s marriage twelve years later. Therefore, the former were breaking new ground which was never going to be an easy task. As one paper noted sympathetically after Lady Clancarty’s death, it was ‘less usual than now for Peers to seek wives behind the footlights.’³¹ Others did follow similar arrangements, though there were only four among Irish title holders from 1910 and 1924. These included: Irene Marguerite Pix’s 1910 marriage to Sir Richard Levinge; May Etheridge’s 1913 marriage to Edward Fitzgerald, who became the 7th duke of Leinster in 1922; Oliva Mary Meatyard’s 1922 marriage to Henry Ponsonby Moore, 10th earl of Drogheda; Joyce Gunning Kerr’s 1924 marriage to James Boswell Talbot, 6th baron Talbot of Malahide. Significantly, in relation to the Clancarty and Headfort marriages, neither ended in divorce and both successfully produced successors to the titles. The key consideration here is the maintenance of social boundaries whereby the aristocracy set

²⁹ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 1 Jan. 1907.

³⁰ *Hull Daily Mail*, 1 Jan. 1907.

³¹ *Leeds Mercury*, 1 Jan. 1907.

out rules regarding what was tolerable and acceptable within the group. In effect, marriage was the acid test of class membership.³²

Scandal and affairs

In London in the 1880s the higher social circles were divided between the Marlborough House set and the Souls.³³ The former was a clique surrounding Albert Prince of Wales and his home Marlborough House; its members were renowned for their fondness of gambling, racing, smoking, and women.³⁴ The Souls, on the other hand, considered themselves a group of intellectual elites who abhorred worldly leisure activities and focused on the aesthetic and literary world. Both groups devised a special code of conduct ‘which permitted liaisons with gentlewomen as long as no scandal undermined the family unit.’³⁵ Until such time as a woman had given birth to an heir, liaisons with other men were forbidden: according to Lambert ‘the great ... families could not risk having their daughters seduced, or the paternity of their heir’s suspect.’³⁶

One peripheral member of the Souls was Hermione, wife of Gerald Fitzgerald the 5th duke of Leinster. Physically she was considered a beauty, causing a stir at Lady Marlborough’s ball in April 1881 when she appeared as a seventeen-year-old.³⁷ Her marriage three years later to thirty-three-year-old Gerald saw her take up residence at Kilkea Castle, Kildare and later at Carton House, Maynooth when her husband succeeded to the title in 1887. Three children were born, though the eldest, a daughter, died in infancy. Hermione suffered from melancholy which manifested itself in nervous collapse and periods of blackness which afflicted her over the years. All indications show Lady Hermione as a caring and dutiful mother who enjoyed the company of her two boys and marvelled at their achievements. Her husband, however, grew distant, cold and controlling particularly after the birth of their second son, Desmond, in 1888. Gerald yearned for a quiet ‘country gentleman’s life’ rather than ‘the more exciting pursuits of fashion and pleasure.’³⁸

³² Thompson, *The Rise of respectable society*, p. 93.

³³ Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 344.

³⁴ Elizabeth Longford, *Victoria* (London, 2011), p. 397; see also, Leslie, *Edwardians in love*; Elizabeth Kehoe, *Fortune’s daughters* (London, 2004); Horn, *High society*.

³⁵ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 15.

³⁶ Lambert, *Unquiet souls*, p. 7.

³⁷ *The Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times*, 9 Apr. 1881; see also, Dooley, *The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster, 1872-1948*; Estorick, *Heirs and graces*; Leslie, *Edwardians in love*; Lambert, *Unquiet souls*.

³⁸ *Irish Times*, 2 Dec. 1893.

According to Lady Daisy Plunkett the duke was ‘good and kind’, but he was not right for Hermione. She stated: ‘she wanted a man whom she could look up to and fear a little, as well as love.’³⁹ Indeed Lady Fingall’s description of the duchesses’ boudoir as ‘a small white room with a narrow bed like a girl’s’ suggests that the Leinsters were not a devoted couple.⁴⁰

At Abbeylax House, Queen’s County, Lady Hermione met Lady Evelyn de Vesce’s married brother, Hugo, Lord Elcho. Hugo was not known for being faithful; he and Lady Hermione embarked on an intense but doomed love affair. She initially fought her feelings, promising Evelyn not to see Hugo, ‘for the temptation will be terrible and I am not always brave’.⁴¹ The uncertainty of her feelings troubled her: ‘I shrink from his doubting my love. I shrink from the overwhelming bitterness he feels when I ask him to let me love him differently. And he has a right to feel bitter – for I made him love me.’⁴² Later with more confidence she wrote: ‘I love Hugo – and as long as it is his happiness to keep me – I cannot go back. I owe him every gratitude – how can I hurt him now?’⁴³ This was likely written when she finally left her husband and fled to England and to Hugo.

The affair resulted in a rift between the two women leading Hermione to cut off contact for a time until Evelyn could ‘forget the crime of my loving him... your condemning eyes – and the weight of your unspoken words would torture me too much. I could not bear it.’⁴⁴ Evelyn’s disapproval can be gauged from Hermione’s written responses to her letters: ‘You have not realised the one wide essential difference between us – that what to you seems revolting, miserable, hideous and squalid, to me in my love, seems none of these things.’⁴⁵ Later she wrote: ‘do not think I am ashamed of admitting what I feel for him. It is part of my love for him – perhaps a small part- but as real and genuine in the

³⁹ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 178.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*; see also, Dooley, *The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster, 1872-1948*; Estorick, *Heirs and graces*.

⁴¹ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴² Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴³ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴⁴ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, Tuesday, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴⁵ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

heart of it. And I am not ashamed of it.... And now Evelyn Darling – leave me if you must – but say no more.⁴⁶

It is difficult to know what Hermione's intentions were after she abandoned her marriage but the rumour mongers quickly began their condemnation. She lamented: 'one does not realise the pain their shafts can inflict until one has become this target.'⁴⁷ It is likely that her resulting pregnancy and the complications it created ended the couple's passion. The extent of her moral blindness was foremost in her thoughts when she wrote: 'I have loved with all my heart and strength and blindly and selfishly I gave everything up to it. My life with its ugly complicated secrets was laid bare – all its difficulties – all its helplessness...earthly love brings no peace – no happiness.'⁴⁸

It was now that Hermione's younger sister Lady Helen Vincent stepped in to negotiate a resolution between Hermione and Gerald. Helen insisted that common-sense should prevail and that Hermione should be afforded some degree of liberty within the marriage.⁴⁹ A solution of sorts was reached which allowed Hermione's new-born son, Edward, to appear to have been born within the confines of marriage and reared alongside her other sons.⁵⁰ Meanwhile Evelyn and Hermione's relationship remained cool for a period though eventually they were reconciled despite Gerald's view that Evelyn was a bad influence on his wife. For Hermione this friendship brought her 'infinite peace.'⁵¹

However, life for the Leinsters did not have a happy ending. Gerald became ill with typhoid and died in December 1893.⁵² In June of 1894 Hermione left Carton for England due to her own ill health, having been diagnosed with consumption.⁵³ The disease progressed despite attempts at new treatments in France and she died in Mentone in

⁴⁶ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, Sunday night, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴⁷ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, Saturday, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴⁸ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁴⁹ Dooley, *The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster*, p. 92; see also, Lambert, *Unquiet souls*, p. 78.

⁵⁰ Jane Abdy & Charlotte Gere, *The souls* (London, 1984), p.175.

⁵¹ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90).

⁵² *Leinster Express*, 9 Dec. 1893; see also, Dooley, *The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster*, pp 101-12.

⁵³ Letter from Hermione Leinster to Evelyn de Vesce, n.d., (Somerset Heritage Centre, Papers of Evelyn Vesey [née Charteris], Viscountess de Vesce DD/DRU 90); see also, *Kildare Observer*, 23 Mar. 1895.

March 1895 at the age of thirty-one. As to Hugo, he travelled to see Hermione when it was evident that she was dying, persuaded by his wife that it was his duty to remain at her side in France.⁵⁴ Newspapers at the time reported that he was travelling with his brother and friends to Florence, which was evidently a means of hiding the truth.⁵⁵ In a final twist, Hermione's and Hugo's son, Edward, succeeded to the dukedom in 1922, his older brothers having predeceased him. The story surrounding Hermione's affair, pregnancy and reconciliation with her husband is not to be found in any newspapers of the day. She is referred to only as a great beauty, amiable and a 'charitable friend' to the poor of Maynooth.⁵⁶ Upon her death one paper lamented: 'when the gods give so much they have much to take away.'⁵⁷

Another marriage which was deeply affected by infidelity was that of Lord and Lady Louth who had married in 1890. Eugenie Bellaires, or Phoebe as she was known, was the daughter of the British vice-consul in Biarritz, while Randal Plunkett had succeeded to the baronetcy of Louth in 1883. The couple had two children, a daughter, Eugenie, born in 1891, followed by a son, Otway, the following year. Despite his wife's devotion, Randal was an unsettled and unhappy man, plagued by financial difficulties and prone to infidelity. By 1902 his sister-in-law Ada advised him to abandon the 'life lived on the surface for your wife and society with another lived secretly for something and somebody else.'⁵⁸ While chiding him for sowing his wild oats, she reminded him that he bore 'such a fine name' and advised him to leave his son a reputation without 'even a shave of suspicion....keep to your home and your children and make both the better for having you.'⁵⁹ However in 1904 she warned him that 'perpetual hiding wears a man out, turns him into a sort of downtrodden sneak which is seen written on his very face and escapes no one. It would have broken my heart to see you get to that old boy by inches, and you would you know! I have the utmost faith in your word.'⁶⁰ Phoebe's letters to Ralph during this time are full of despair and frustration. She believed he cared nothing for her 'as a

⁵⁴ Lambert, *Unquiet souls*, pp 64-6.

⁵⁵ *Pall Mall Gazette*, 20 Apr. 1895.

⁵⁶ *Yorkshire Gazette*, 30 Mar. 1895.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

⁵⁸ Ada Countess Duchard to Randal Lord Louth 10 Sept. 1902, (N.L.I., Louth Papers, MS 40,099/17).

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Ada Countess Duchard to Randal Lord Louth, 15 Jan. 1904, (N.L.I., Louth Papers, MS 40,099/17).

wife or a friend and companion.’⁶¹ Her hurt and sense of betrayal is palpable when she confronted the issue of his infidelity:

That other women should come into your life is maddening to me and that you should hourly show me as you do Randal, how less than nothing I your wife am, is sending me straight down to hell. All the gentle part of my nature is leaving me and the iron of sorrow is making a fiend of me.⁶²

Whatever attempts Randal made to redeem his relationship with Phoebe were short-lived. He stayed away from home for long periods, leaving his wife and children without any means of financial support and in 1907 attempted to sell Louth Hall without his wife’s knowledge.⁶³ Finally, in 1910, he informed his wife that he had no intention of returning to her. Phoebe was granted an uncontested divorce in 1912 on grounds of desertion and her husband’s misconduct with other women.⁶⁴ Randal had been openly living with a woman in London for some time. Phoebe was given custody of her youngest child, her son, her daughter being over twenty-one at the time. Randal remarried in 1913 and again in 1926, and did have another son. Phoebe remained unmarried for considerably longer but eventually married ‘a bachelor of independent means’ in 1929 at the age of fifty-one.⁶⁵

While the Leinster and Louth marriages were initially happy, and freely entered into, others were less fortunate. In 1871 twenty-two year old Maria Preston ‘was sacrificed to the fetish of an Irish earldom’ when her parents insisted that she marry William Cuffe, 4th earl of Desart, a ‘spendthrift and penniless nobleman’ who frequently attended shooting parties at the Preston home in Yorkshire.⁶⁶ Maria’s parents were determined that ‘nothing but a coronet’ would do for their daughter.⁶⁷ Maria was the great-granddaughter of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, a revolutionary of 1798 while William Cuffe could boast close family ties to some of the most prominent families in Britain including the Abercorns, Bedfords, Buccleuch, Devonshires, Baths and Harewoods. In 1782 the

⁶¹ Phoebe Louth to Randal Louth, n.d. (N.L.I., Louth Papers, MS 40,099/7).

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *New Zealand Herald*, 28 Dec. 1912.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 Jun. 1929.

⁶⁶ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 Jul. 1878; *Chicago Tribune*, 5 May 1891; see also, Art Kavanagh, *Butler of Ormonde, Cuffe of Desart* (2013), pp 35-7.

⁶⁷ *Thames Advertiser*, 9 Jul. 1878.

couple's only child, Lady Kathleen, was born and while the marriage was 'not of the closest affection,' it quickly unravelled with the discovery of an affair between Lady Desart and the actor, Charles Sugden.⁶⁸ The uncontested divorce saw the earl, who was unkindly described as 'one of the ugliest men in the United Kingdom,' granted his divorce, awarded costs against the correspondent and given custody of the couple's daughter.⁶⁹ Lady Desart's subsequent marriage to Sugden lasted until her money ran out after which the couple divorced on the grounds of her infidelity.⁷⁰ William Cuffe's subsequent marriage to the wealthy Ellen Bischoffsheim proved a more satisfactory one, lasting until his death in 1898.

Meanwhile, Moira O'Brien, daughter of Edward, 14th Baron Inchiquin and his second wife Ellen Harriet White, married Sir Frederick Hervey-Bathurst in 1901, ostensibly to secure financial support 'owing to the extravagant number of her brothers and sisters' being a drain on the family fortunes.⁷¹ Significantly, she was described in the newspapers as being 'high-spirited and rebellious to all authority' but also 'like most Irish women, impatient.'⁷² Perhaps this refers to her independent nature in opening a milliner's shop called 'Moira's' in Marble Arch in London, when she was still single.⁷³ The couple did not 'get along well together' and had obtained a separation several years before finally divorcing in 1912.⁷⁴ Ethel, 15th Baroness Inchiquin, accepted that separation was the only option for her sister-in-law, and wrote that Sir Frederick 'must be rather queer now, and I should think he might become dangerous if angry,...he is so headstrong and rough.'⁷⁵ Ethel's awareness that cruelty was the root of the problem between the Bathursts evidently influenced her view of their marriage. Overall she found the situation 'such a scandal' and hoped the courts could be kept out of it.⁷⁶ She advised her husband Lucius to avoid his brother-in-law, particularly as Lucius was assisting Moira to gain a separation.⁷⁷ While Sir Frederick instigated the divorce on grounds of infidelity on the

⁶⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 18 May 1878.

⁶⁹ *New Zealand Herald*, 13 Jul. 1878.

⁷⁰ *Chicago Tribune*, 5 May 1891.

⁷¹ *Otautau Standard*, 25 Jun. 1912.

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Irish Times*, 20 Apr. 1901.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, n.d. (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/6).

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*; see also, the Blandford case, Lady Albertha Hamilton and George Blandford, in Mary S. Lovell, *The Churchills* (London, 2011); *Weekly Irish Times*, 17 Feb. 1883; Lambert. *Unquiet souls*, pp 37-8 and p. 73.

⁷⁷ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, n.d. (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/6).

part of his wife, she countered by threatening to reveal his less than virtuous life. In the end Moira was granted ‘free access to her son and the indefinite continuation of her allowance.’⁷⁸

Lord Henry Ashbrook behaved in a most respectable manner towards his wife despite her adultery and lies. Emily Abingdon married Henry Jeffery Flower, 6th Viscount Ashbrook, in 1866 at the tender age of eighteen. He was thirty-one and was holder of a large estate comprising over 23,000 acres across five counties, the bulk of which was located in Kilkenny, Kings and Queen’s Counties. However, the family had financial difficulties as evidenced by the 1877 divorce of Henry and Emily. While the case was instigated as a result of Emily’s infidelity with a gentleman named Hugh Sydney Baillie, the effect of the estate encumbrances caused friction between the couple from 1871 when Henry succeeded his father.⁷⁹ As a gesture of good-will he invested a substantial sum of money in bank stock and altered his will leaving his wife a healthy sum. Despite a series of reconciliations undertaken between the couple prior to court proceedings, Emily could not content herself with her husband’s wishes and the couple ceased occupying the same room.⁸⁰ The couple lived in relative peace until 1874 when John Baillie, a twenty-eight-year-old widower was introduced to the Ashbrooks. Lord Ashbrook later claimed he was unaware of a relationship between his wife and Baillie. However, when Emily announced she was with child in 1875, her husband had little doubt that the child was not his.⁸¹ He left their lodging house at Half Moon Street and from then on did not see his wife again. By the time the case went to court two years later, the child Henry had died aged only two months and so the question of legitimacy did not become an issue for the court.⁸² The *London Daily News* observed that had the child lived, ‘no doubt more interest would have attached to the matter...perhaps fortunately for itself and for all parties, as that painful question would not now under any circumstances arise.’⁸³

⁷⁸ *Chicago Tribune*, 21 Mar. 1912; see also, details of animosity between Lady Flora Muskerry and her husband, Hamilton Deane-Morgan, *Irish Times* 5 Nov. 1904.

⁷⁹ *London Evening Standard*, 1 Mar. 1877; see also, Mark Thomas ‘Knocknatrina House, Laois’ available at www.abandonedireland.com [25 Jun. 2016].

⁸⁰ *London Daily News*, 1 Mar. 1877.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ *Ibid.*

After the birth of her son, and in an attempt to end her intimacy with Bailie, Emily Ashbrook fled to Paris. Bailie was said to have followed her there and resided in the same hotel. This appears plausible as they then moved to Yorkshire where they openly resided as man and wife. Lord Ashbrook's solicitor made it clear that the intimate details of this case were only necessary due to the accusations of cruelty made by his wife. Indeed, he had hoped to avoid such public accusations bringing 'disgrace to him [Lord Ashbrook] and his name.'⁸⁴ He went on: 'it is with the deepest pain that at last he is obliged to expose the injuries inflicted upon him in a public court.'⁸⁵ The jury found Lord Ashbrook not guilty of cruelty and his wife guilty of adultery. According to one account: she was worthy of only pity, being 'lost and abandoned,' her lover having died in 1876.⁸⁶ She was described as having no tendency towards vice, and 'the worst that could be said of her was that she was too light in her behaviour and guilty of too much levity,' unwilling to listen to the advice of her friends.⁸⁷ While Lord Ashbrook had 'done all that a gentleman and a man of honour ought to do, that he has been a kind and gentle and most affectionate husband, who has been cruelly treated by those whom he has trusted.'⁸⁸ Indeed the defence made no attempt to substantiate Lord Ashbrook's alleged cruelty and perhaps in a final good-will gesture to his wife who at this stage was suffering from ill-health, her costs were taken care of by her husband. Additionally, Henry Ashbrook agreed that £500 should be paid annually to Lady Ashbrook for her maintenance.⁸⁹ At the time this was a very generous gesture as there was no legal compulsion on Henry to do so.⁹⁰

John Beresford, the 5th marquess of Waterford, who had succeeded to the title in 1866, also found himself embroiled in divorce proceedings.⁹¹ Capt. John Vivian initiated the case as a result of his wife's adultery with the marquess. Having declared his intention to marry Florence Josephina Vivian, once the divorce was out of the way, the marquess found that his family were very uneasy at the prospect and initiated proceedings to delay the Vivian decree.⁹² The end result was that the divorce stood and the marquess married Florence Vivian in 1872, though she died after childbirth the following year, having

⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 1 Mar. 1877.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *London Daily News*, 1 Mar. 1877.

⁸⁸ *Irish Times*, 1 Mar. 1877.

⁸⁹ *Lloyds Weekly Newspaper*, 25 Nov. 1877.

⁹⁰ See Lambert, *Unquiet souls*, pp 37-8, and p. 73.

⁹¹ *Irish Times*, 7 Nov. 1866.

⁹² *Irish Times*. 10 Mar. 1870; *Reynold's Newspaper*, 8 May 1870.

delivered a still-born child.⁹³ Despite marrying again in 1874 and having four children, the marquess took his own life in 1895. Whether the Waterfords were concerned by his state of health prior to his first marriage is unclear, but he was evidently a troubled man. His own parents' marriage had not been a contented one as his father, John Beresford, the 4th marquess (previously the rector at Mullaghbrack, Co. Armagh and prebendary of Armagh Cathedral), treated his wife, Christina Leslie, in a heavy handed manner.⁹⁴ Despite this Christina did not seek a separation or divorce.

At the time of the divorce, one newspaper noted that the marquess' conduct had 'brought disgrace upon an honourable man, broke up his hitherto happy home, blasted for ever the character of the woman he adored, and affixed upon his innocent, helpless children a stigma even time cannot remove.'⁹⁵ His attendance at 'select' balls given by the prince and princess of Wales was deemed inappropriate. The paper defended its right to comment: 'as public journalists we have an undoubted right, and shall most assuredly unreservedly exercise it, to comment upon anything of a questionable nature that presents itself to our notice in relation to the conduct of that royalty for whose maintenance we are compelled to pay.'⁹⁶ Princess Alexandra appears to have received the worst criticism for forgetting her duties as wife and mother 'and also of those society has a right to expect from one in such an elevated a position' by welcoming the marquess into her home.⁹⁷ The article went on to state: 'it would appear the surest way to obtain royal favour in the Court of England is by appearing in the Divorce Court....are we about to restore the manners and customs of the Georgian Regency, where the most favoured visitor at Carlton House were ladies of easy virtue, and men of no virtue at all?'⁹⁸ In a final blow the article finished with the adage: 'Tell me the company you keep, and I will tell you what you are!'⁹⁹ Significantly, this commentary highlights the public perceptions and changing attitudes towards elitism. The paper's argument that Florence was the innocent woman led astray by a roguish and unscrupulous man is surprising as many took the opposing view to blacken the name of women caught up in scandalous behaviour. The

⁹³ *Irish Times* 10 Apr. 1873.

⁹⁴ See Charles Beresford, *Memories of Lord Charles Beresford* (London, 1914); Lord John George Beresford (1773-1862 uncle of the 4th marquess of Waterford, was the Archbishop of Armagh in 1822, see www.stpatricks-cathedral.org [21 Mar. 2016]; see also, Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, pp 110-1.

⁹⁵ *Reynolds Newspaper*, 19 Nov. 1871; see also, Lambert, *Unquiet souls*, pp 37-8, and p. 73.

⁹⁶ *Reynold's Newspaper*, 8 May 1870.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

marchioness of Donegall, for instance, was portrayed in 1889 as intemperate and frequently drunk, which appeared to show her husband as a long-suffering man despite his penchant for cards and the company of ‘bad men and women’ whom he brought into the family home after his marriage.¹⁰⁰

The political clout of Baron Connemara

The Connemara case was rather more sinister. Robert Bourke, son of the earl of Mayo and later Baron Connemara, married Lady Susan Broun Ramsay, daughter of the marquess of Dalhousie, in November 1863. The couple resided primarily in England until he was appointed to the governorship of Madras in 1886. Three years later, Lady Connemara was compelled to return to England due to her husband’s relationship with a servant, Hannah Moore. It became apparent to Susan that her husband had infected her with a sexually transmitted disease, but the truth of the matter did not come to light until she saw a physician in England. The practitioner she attended did not reveal to her the exact nature of her condition but prescribed her medicine ‘which would be prescribed for a certain disease...as the sore did not yield to the ordinary remedy.’¹⁰¹ During the court case it was revealed that Lady Connemara suffered from a syphilitic disease of the tongue, something her husband had contracted during a trip to Turkey many years before.¹⁰²

A further intrigue was that a lady originally accused as correspondent was withdrawn from the case prior to the trial. At the original trial Sir Henry James was commissioned by ‘a lady of high position implicated in the petition.’¹⁰³ Indeed, in 1889 it was rumoured that all was not well in Government House in India. The governor’s wife had left, refusing to return until ‘a certain lady had left the residency.’¹⁰⁴ Later accounts stated that ‘the lady in question, accompanied by her husband had quitted India.’¹⁰⁵ Instead the servant, Hannah, was named and had to testify in court. However, Lady Connemara and her solicitors were persistent during the alimony hearings in having the lady’s name made public as ‘this lady was a party to the suit and ...the Court had really no jurisdiction to keep her name out.’¹⁰⁶ The judge warned Lady Connemara that ‘you cannot benefit one

¹⁰⁰ *London Evening Standard*, 16 Jul. 1896.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰² *Portsmouth Evening News*, 27 Nov. 1890.

¹⁰³ *Staffordshire Sentinel*, 21 May 1889.

¹⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁶ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 20 Feb. 1892.

penny by retaining her name' therefore the assumption being that Lady Connemara was seeking to name and shame this woman who was most likely of high rank.¹⁰⁷ Evidently the judge thought likewise and dismissed the application, believing Lady Connemara had merely attached the woman's name 'for the purpose of harassing and annoying her.'¹⁰⁸

The *Dundee Advertiser* took a dim view of the whole scandal citing Lord Connemara as living an 'unclean life' and condemned those who made him a peer and failed to remove him from his post as governor as soon as news of the affair broke.¹⁰⁹ As in the Waterford case, the paper wondered if his peerage would be withdrawn, or indeed would he find the doors of society closed against him. The paper stated that his supporters and political allies would be 'blind to the presence among his warmest supporters in the House of Lords of more than one Peer who have graduated with "honours" in the Divorce Court and are still welcomed in the "highest circles".'¹¹⁰ Another paper called the scandal the 'most revolting of recent years' and while Lord Connemara was not guilty of ill-treatment his 'debauchery had such a ruinous effect on his wife's health as to substantiate the charge of cruelty.'¹¹¹ Indeed this paper also questioned 'the effects of the "barbarian" section of the population on the national life.'¹¹² Prominent cases such as this, reported in the country's newspapers, was not in the best interests of either the aristocracy or the political elite. The queen, it was reported, attempted to 'effect an amicable settlement between the distinguished couple' and when that failed an attempt was made to have the case delayed until Lord Connemara's service in Madras was complete.¹¹³ The post was worth £9,000 a year.¹¹⁴

This case highlights the extent to which those in political and social power attempted to influence the private affairs of those within their circle, not for the couples' benefit but to curtail any social or even political damage as a result of it becoming public. The criticism of Lord Connemara was short-lived; effectively his foreign career was over as he was sixty-three years of age and in all likelihood due to retire. Those who attended the

¹⁰⁷ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 20 Feb. 1892.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Dundee Advertiser*, 28 Nov. 1890.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ *Bristol Mercury*, 28 Nov. 1890.

¹¹² *Ibid.*

¹¹³ *Shields Daily Gazette*, 1 Mar. 1890.

¹¹⁴ *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 10 Nov. 1890.

proceedings of the divorce case included Sir James Fergusson, under-secretary of state for foreign affairs, and Sir Robert Peel.¹¹⁵ His private life was unaffected as he remarried four years after his divorce, as did Lady Susan who married Surgeon General Briggs.¹¹⁶ Dr Briggs served as the medical officer of the Indian Medical Corp under Lord Connemara and was the man Connemara accused of having an affair with his wife, as part of the former's defence. Dr Briggs suffered as a result of the accusations, and believing his good name and honour under threat he wrote a letter which his superiors took as a breach of discipline and cancelled his reinstatement as surgeon general. The *Derby Daily Telegraph* commented that 'it appears to us that the feelings of a man smarting keenly under a sense of unfounded charges against his honour, and of material injury to his professional prospects, were insufficiently considered by those who cancelled his reinstatement.'¹¹⁷ This was a barb thrown at the duke of Cambridge who was believed to have instigated the sanction. Another commentary highlighted the 'disgraceful persecution' of Major Briggs for giving evidence in the Connemara case, and exposing 'the base character of Lord Connemara, an intimate friend of the duke.'¹¹⁸ In fact Major Briggs was in his own words 'on four occasions ... driven away from the army by H.R.H. the Commander-in-Chief' for reasons other than the performance of his duty.'¹¹⁹ While Lord Connemara was in attendance at a garden party at Marlborough House, Lady Connemara was 'refused permission to write her name in the Queen's book.'¹²⁰ Certainly it would appear that major influences were used to quell any scandal in relation to Lord Connemara, and when the scandal did erupt the reputations of both Major Briggs and Lady Connemara were ruined by false rumours and accusations. According to Major Briggs, the 'conspiracy' directed at Lady Connemara, was 'to prevent a scandal from approaching the name of the representative of the queen in Madras.'¹²¹ His own downfall in the army was due to his refusal to save Lord Connemara, which resulted in 'pure vengeance.' He added:

the callous and cold-blooded cruelty of the persecution of Lady Susan Ramsay and the recollection of the terrible bodily and mental suffering and misery it has entailed, endured by her with such noble fortitude

¹¹⁵ *St James's Gazette*, 27 Nov. 1890.

¹¹⁶ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 Jan. 1898; *Morning Post*, 26 Jan. 1898.

¹¹⁷ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 13 Mar. 1893.

¹¹⁸ *Reynold's Newspaper*, 8 Apr. 1894.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*

during the past five years impel me as a duty to take this opportunity which the Commander-in-Chief, has given me, to inform HRH that he cannot, however much he may desire to do so, repudiate his actions in that persecution and not dissociate himself from the part he has played in the detestable cabal against the honour and reputation of that lady.¹²²

It transpired that when Major Briggs was removed as co-respondent in the case, he was ordered back to Madras immediately, before court proceedings could begin. Taking the only course open to him, he resigned his commission and attended the trial, where he defended his honour and that of Lady Connemara.¹²³ Once the trial was complete he received no offer of reinstatement until a year later at which stage he found that he was to 'lose thirty-five places in the service which he had won by gallant conduct.'¹²⁴ He appealed, and full reinstatement was made. However, though his appointments were publicly announced or gazetted on three occasions, none were put into effect.

One paper refused to believe a report in 1894 that the queen sent a message of congratulations to Lord Connemara on his engagement to widow Gertrude Coleman, later his second wife.¹²⁵ It stated: 'we live in peculiar times when the heroes of disgraceful divorce proceedings are almost deified. At present Mr Parnell and Lord Connemara divide the honours.'¹²⁶ His marital peccadilloes aside, the main concern for the press appears to have been his political influence. Having been a conservative MP, Connemara's divorce provided an opportunity for his opponents to lash out at him. One commentator stated: 'we hope it may convince many respectable Conservatives that personal scandal is not a decent political weapon. There is one thing to be said in favour of Lord Connemara. He had cleared out of a position which his misconduct rendered him unfit to hold. In this respect he has the advantage over his brother "hero".'¹²⁷

In looking at these divorce cases it becomes apparent that while some couples made private arrangements within the confines of their marriages to ultimately lead separate

¹²² *Reynold's Newspaper*, 8 Apr. 1894.

¹²³ *Yorkshire Post and Leeds Intelligencer*, 13 Mar. 1893.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*

¹²⁵ *Hull Daily Mail*, 15 Oct. 1894.

¹²⁶ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 8 Dec. 1890.

¹²⁷ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 28 Nov. 1890.

lives, others chose to legally cease all association with their former spouses.¹²⁸ However, it was when this sort of arrangement was not in place that relations were subjected to petty squabbles and jealousies which ultimately saw many couples end up in the divorce courts. Many were persuaded by relatives or friends not to subject themselves to the proceedings of a court room, and ultimately remained in difficult marriages despite their unhappiness. Lady Connemara and Major Briggs were considered expendable while Lord Connemara and his close connection with the duke of Cambridge and the intimate circle surrounding him was to be protected at all costs. Influence and power was used to prevent public scandal, with the queen appealing for a compromise. That the anonymous ‘lady’ had her name kept out of the public arena can only have motivated Lady Connemara to initiate the divorce and seek the other woman’s public shaming.

While divorce in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was not a novelty – in 1912, for example, 500 cases were being heard in London during the Michaelmas term alone - amongst the aristocracy, it was a rarity.¹²⁹ By examining the marriages of Irish title holders between 1870 and 1920, a better understanding of the situation is gleaned. Of the 259 marriages which occurred between 1870 and 1900, only 6 divorces were granted before 1914. It is only after the Great War that any significant increase occurred with 10 marriages out of a possible 36 ending in divorce during the following 25 years.¹³⁰ While divorce may have been a final resort it was not an easy option. Societal opinion and the legal system were stacked against women – legally men had a simpler route to obtaining a divorce and retaining sole guardianship of children of the marriage, and could even claim damages against an adulterous third party. Furthermore, the publication in newspapers of the intimate details of divorce cases was not a desired outcome and suggests the main reason for uncontested cases. Newspapers had increased in popularity during the latter part of the nineteenth century aided by an insatiable desire by the public for scandal.¹³¹ The public interest in a scandal depended on how titillating it was, the social prominence of the individuals involved, and the potential for damage from the

¹²⁸ See Horn, *High society*, pp 98-9; see also, Lambert, *Unquiet souls*; Steinbach, *Women in England*. Regarding Leonie Leslie and the duke of Connaught’s relationship see Kehoe, *Fortune’s daughters*; Leslie, *Edwardians in love*.

¹²⁹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 11 Oct. 1912; see also, Horn, *High society*, pp 98-9.

¹³⁰ All of these marriages took place by 1920.

¹³¹ William A. Cohen, *Sex scandal: the private parts of Victorian fiction* (London 1996), p. 6; see also, Wilson, *Women, marriage and property* (Manchester, 2009); Claudia Nelson, *Family ties in Victorian England* (Westport, 2007); Lesley A. Hall, *Sex, gender and social change in Britain since 1880* (London, 2013).

revelations.¹³² The *Evening Telegram*, commenting on English society in 1897, considered the ability of the aristocracy to close ranks not only in their own interests but also ‘in an effort to hush the matter up’.¹³³ It stated that ‘there are few people either in society or in business who are not cursed with some skeleton, the existence of which they are eager at all costs to keep from becoming known.’¹³⁴ The public consumption of scandal was not restricted to the British press, but traversed the globe, particularly the US. It would also be incorrect to assume that interest was restricted to the middle and lower classes or, indeed, that it was the speciality of women.

Private musings and censorship

Frederick Seymour in writing to his cousin Constance Leslie stated that ‘I haven’t heard of anybody doing anything very wicked – at least no one has been found out for some time. They must be hushing up a great many things don’t you think so – We haven’t been shocked for at least 2 months – I must go up to London and look up a dowager or 2 and find out what it means. If I hear anything I will telegraph.’¹³⁵ While privately commenting on a divorce case in London, Constance Leslie referred to the whole affair as ‘nauseous’ due to the intimate details of the case made public in the press.¹³⁶ In relation to Parnell’s ‘flirtation...with Mrs O’Shea,’ Constance felt herself liking the man, despite her disdain for his behaviour.¹³⁷ She wrote: ‘somebody has well compared him to Napoleon in his audacity and cynical disregard of those rules of ethics of the gentle ordinary mortals.’¹³⁸

In order to control the spread of scandal, methods of damage limitation were employed, varying from the efforts of Constance Leslie who ‘ransacked her husband’s letter-chests, censoring and mutilating with nail scissors improper’ family correspondence, to the less effective efforts of the Beresfords of Waterford.¹³⁹ Delaval Beresford, brother of the marquess of Waterford, died suddenly in 1906 in the United States where he had been ranching for over twenty years. The family immediately galvanised into action, with Lord Charles and Lord Marcus heading over to settle their brother’s affairs. Mina Beresford,

¹³² Cohen, *Sex scandal: the private parts of Victorian fiction*, p. 6.

¹³³ *Evening Telegram*, 2 Mar. 1897.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ Frederick Seymour to Constance Leslie, 18 Sept. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/31).

¹³⁶ Constance Leslie to Marie Louise de la Ramee, n.d., (N.L.I. Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/34).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*; see also, Thomas Bartlett, *Ireland a history* (Cambridge, 2014) pp 342-5; *Cardiff Times*, 22 Nov. 1890, for further information on the O’Shea divorce case.

¹³⁸ Constance Leslie, 3 Dec. 1890, (N.L.I. Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/34).

¹³⁹ Anita Leslie, *Mrs Fitzherbert* (New York, 1960), p. 16.

Charles' wife, indicated the urgency by stating that there would be 'disagreements without end (black woman, wills, etc!).'¹⁴⁰ Delaval lived in Mexico where interracial marriages were legal, with his common law black wife, Florida Wolfe.¹⁴¹ Florida, or Lady Flo as she was known, saved Delaval's business from the brink of bankruptcy as a result of his drinking.¹⁴² Once the Beresford brothers arrived, Lady Flo was pressurised to revoke all claims to half his estate and was left with a paltry \$10,000 from his will with a further \$5,000 for stating that her relationship was no more than that of master and servant.¹⁴³ This outcome was widely publicised in the press both sides of the Atlantic.

Admiral Charlie Beresford, son of the 5th marquess of Waterford, and commander of the Mediterranean Fleet, was the toughest of five brothers and 'incorrigibly fond of the ladies.'¹⁴⁴ He married Mina Gardner in 1878 daughter of Richard Gardner, MP for Leicester, and his wife Lucy.¹⁴⁵ Mina was fixated with her appearance, wore heavy makeup and piled false hair on top of her own causing her husband to remark loudly when she arrived for dinner: 'here comes my little freshly painted cutter.'¹⁴⁶ Shane Leslie recalled Mina looking at him in his pram and: 'when he reached up to grab what he thought was a butterfly, one of her eyebrows came off in his hand!'¹⁴⁷ Mina's obsession with her looks was, according to Anita Leslie, based on the fact that Mina was ten years her husband's senior.¹⁴⁸ In fact Mina was six years his junior and her fixation on her appearance more likely the result of his wandering eye.¹⁴⁹ She had cause to be jealous as he embarked on a romance with the 'reckless and tempestuous' Lady Daisy Brooke.¹⁵⁰ In 1888 Daisy learned that Mina was pregnant, which came as a surprise to all as Mina had had only one child up to then, a daughter ten years before. Outraged, Daisy wrote to Charles a fuming letter accusing him of infidelity, but the correspondence was intercepted

¹⁴⁰ Mina Beresford to Leonie Leslie, n.d. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38).

¹⁴¹ The US Supreme Court ruled in 1967 that prohibition on interracial marriages were unconstitutional. Alabama removed its prohibition on interracial marriages in 2000. See www.pbs.org [29 Jul. 201].

¹⁴² Jeff Biggers, *In the Sierra Madre* (Chicago, 2006), p. 140.

¹⁴³ *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 29 May 1907; see also, Biggers, *In the Sierra Madre*, pp 138-140; Florida J Wolfe, (1867-1913) available at www.blackpast.org [28 Jul. 2016].

¹⁴⁴ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 111; see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, pp 2-3; Longford, *Victoria*, pp 559-60.

¹⁴⁵ Beresford, *Memories of Lord Charles Beresford*, p. 151.

¹⁴⁶ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 111.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 164.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 159.

¹⁴⁹ See UK Census returns 1871 and 1881 available at Findmypast.co.uk [29 Jan. 2016].

¹⁵⁰ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 159.

by Mina and despatched to her solicitor for safe-keeping.¹⁵¹ The issue escalated when Daisy turned to the prince of Wales, a good friend of Charles, for assistance. However, Mina refused his request to return the letter, even when he threatened her position in society. The end result was that Charles fell out with the prince, who had commenced an affair with Lady Brooke, and the Beresfords withdrew from society for a time, due to the circulation of an outrageous pamphlet among certain members of society titled *Lady River* which contained a copy of the letter.¹⁵² While society found the whole affair scandalous, Daisy's hosting skills and personality were such that most people liked her, while Mina, on the other hand, was less well thought of and was ridiculed in the press for 'making no end of mischief' with both her tongue and pen.¹⁵³

Conclusion

Aristocratic attitudes towards marriage and its conventions changed little over the period of this study. The breach of rules had little impact on the overall functioning of the class. Those who broke with the social norms were merely rejected or avoided for a time. This is certainly the case when it came to outsiders marrying peers though there were variations in how new wives were treated. While Rose Boote was eventually embraced as a full member of the aristocracy, Belle Bilton remained ostracised.

Marriages which ended in divorce were infrequent amongst title holders up to the Great War. Whether rates followed a similar pattern for second and subsequent sons and also daughters remains to be elucidated. However, there is evidence that frequency among title holders increased in the post-war period. (Of thirty-six sample title holders who married between 1900 and 1920, eleven divorced.)¹⁵⁴ The generational shift indicates that the codes and customs of the aristocracy were slowly being eroded. What once formed the backbone of the Victorian era - dutiful subordination- no longer prevailed to the same degree. Changes to the legal system, gradually provided women with greater rights in relation to divorce, custody of children, and property.

¹⁵¹ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 159.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, pp 161-2.

¹⁵³ *Chicago Tribune*, 5 Jan. 1898.

¹⁵⁴ Sample of 295 marriages of Irish titleholders: before 1870, 125 marriages with no divorces; between 1870-1900, 134 marriages with 4 divorces; after 1900, 36 marriages with 11 divorces. In relation to British peers and divorce see Horn, *High Society*, pp 98-9.

There were significant elements of double standards involved both with divorce and scandal. When indiscretions became public, it was invariably the woman who received the brunt of societal condemnation. Mina Beresford's only crime was to circulate the letter of her husband's mistress within the aristocracy. For this she was ridiculed publicly in the press and had the doors of society shut against her. The aristocracy privately revelled in the saucy secrets of their peers as long as it did not involve their own family. Illicit relationships could be generally ignored; however, public scandal or sullyng the family name in public were frowned upon. Newspapers increasingly replicated what had previously been restricted to private letters. As Anita Leslie put it: 'to sin in secret was one story, to shake the home by getting into the newspaper or law courts, another.'¹⁵⁵

¹⁵⁵ Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, p. 67.

Chapter 3: The American Influence

Towards the end of the nineteenth century the old values and mores of the aristocracy were undermined by the wave of marriages between aristocrats and actresses, and *nouveau riche*.¹ Many considered the tone of society lowered by ‘unscrupulous adventuresses’, often seen as little more than prostitutes.² Others appreciated the beneficial financial gains to be had from such marriages.³ The breaking down of social barriers towards the end of the nineteenth century meant that high birth was no longer a prerequisite for entry into the ranks of the aristocracy. American girls had wealth and beauty. What they lacked was the ultimate status symbol, a title. Irish transatlantic marriages have not been examined in any depth before, and while small in number compared to Anglo-American marriages, they too had an effect on the Irish peerage. To some extent the smaller peerage pool in Ireland may explain the relatively small numbers, but nonetheless these marriages did come to the public attention. Newspapers focused on the numbers of unions particularly during the 1870s and 1880s. The perceived threat by the ‘American invasion’ was in part fuelled by prejudice, snobbery, and jealousies, evident in the news print but also in private letters. What is significant is that over time, the recognition of new-blood flowing through previously aristocratic family veins became more accepted and can be seen as part of the overall societal change.

‘American colony in London’⁴

In 1879 an English paper published a tentative list of American heiresses who married into the British peerage since 1825.⁵ Up to 1877, there had only been eight, the paper noted that the ‘grandsons of peers, baronets or knights’ were not included which would have made the list considerably extended.⁶ Perhaps the purpose was merely to highlight what was seen as a new phenomenon at the time but the truth was that there had been a steady trickle of such marriages throughout the nineteenth century. By 1888, another paper reported that if the phenomenon of American’s marrying peers continued: ‘the ladies of the British aristocracy will have to take some severe measures of reprisal,

¹ Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 348.

² Maureen E Montgomery, ‘Gilded Prostitution’ status, money and transatlantic marriages, 1870-1914, (New York, 2013), p. 85.

³ Ibid.; see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 348.

⁴ *Lichfield Mercury*, 26 Jul. 1901.

⁵ *Berwickshire News and General Advertiser*, 29 Apr. 1879.

⁶ Ibid.; see also, Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers*, p. 52; Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 347.

probably a form of ‘Boycott’ in self-defence.’⁷ In the same year twenty-nine American ladies had married into prominent families leading the paper to consider the increase as a ‘boom.’⁸ Scathingly, the article stated that the American Republic had been founded ‘by housemaids out of place and mechanics out of employment,’ and was now ‘being solidified by English aristocrats out at elbows.’⁹ Seven years later in 1895 the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* declared that British shores were being invaded by German royalties, and foreign financiers, but also by American ‘peeresses’. It was little wonder that the English were ‘becoming anxious in consequence of the increasing success of their numerous competitors.’¹⁰ By the early twentieth century, papers were discussing the ‘dangerous portent’ of the ‘American Colony in London’, declaring the presence of American brides an invasion and leaving little doubt but that it was an unfavourable situation.¹¹

Fuelling the distaste for trans-Atlantic marriages, the musical-comedy, ‘*The American heiress*’, successfully played at the Theatre Royal in 1889. It depicted an aristocratic life forty years hence, where the House of Lords was no more, the law of entail removed and the ‘blue-blooded aristocracy...reduced to a state of woeful impecuniosity.’¹² In order to survive, the aristocracy take positions ‘as butlers, lady helps and the like in the rich households of New York, and give lessons in aristocratic decorum in exchange for democratic dollars.’¹³ While fanciful, the theme played on some of the contemporary concerns of the aristocracy in relation to their place in society and played on the fears of its demise. Later, Professor Padmore Brown ‘discovered’ a serum which when administered would ‘preserve young men of position against marrying Americans.’¹⁴ Advertising it as ‘the most important discovery of the century’ the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* noted that ‘no mother with eligible daughters, and no unmarried woman would, ever be without one of the hyperdemic [sic] syringes filled to the nozzle with the Anti-American Alliance fluid.’¹⁵ In 1900 *Reynolds’s Newspaper* claimed a far more ‘sinister’

⁷ *Huddersfield Chronicle*, 24 Sept. 1888.

⁸ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 14 Nov. 1888.

⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁰ *Dundee Evening Telegraph* 7 Oct. 1895.

¹¹ *Lichfield Mercury*, 26 Jul. 1901; *Reynolds’s Newspaper*, 25 Nov. 1900.

¹² *The Era*, 8 Apr. 1899.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Dundee Evening Telegraph* 7 Oct. 1895.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

aspect of the American influx was the undermining of democracy.¹⁶ The British nobility now had a ‘powerful bulwark’ in American wealth and influence with which to prop up their declining position and power.¹⁷ Aristocracies, by their nature, grew out of wealth and with the ‘great Anglo-American power of title riches’ the ‘policy of Jingo Imperialism pursued on both side of the Atlantic, this sinister power will grow and increase.’¹⁸ While alarmist in nature, the newspaper was quick to state that it had no ‘remedy’ but merely wished its ‘readers to know the fact.’¹⁹

‘Exceptional advantages and introductions’²⁰

Introductions were required to gain access into society and the houses of the elite. It was not uncommon for money to be exchanged for those with few or any connections. The *Grantham Journal* believed that women, who succumbed to such associations, while they were ladies of fortunes, were unlikely to have been from the ranks of the peerage.²¹ However, the fact remains that incidences did occur and unscrupulous individuals sought payment in order to provide introductions to potential partners. It gives an indication of how attractive the ranks of the peerage were to those outside it and the lengths to which people were willing to go in order to gain admittance. Henry Labouchere (1831-1912), MP, diplomat and journalist, recalled many amusing stories in his column in *Truth* magazine concerning the matrimonial experiences of the British aristocracy.²² In 1908 his column recounted the use of an agency by a peer to secure a ‘desirable marriage’ purely along ‘business lines.’²³ The agency in question used the services of a ‘society sub-agent’, an ‘astute female’ who would make the necessary introductions to wealthy American women seeking a noble husband. After the marriage had taken place the peer was ‘seriously disillusioned’ when he realised that the ‘riches of the happy bride had been inadvertently over-estimated.’²⁴ . In another case, an anonymous countess had ‘borrowed’ money from a matrimonial agent, Mr Spaulding, and in return she had promised to promote his clients in society. Unfortunately, the business arrangement came to light

¹⁶ *Reynolds's Newspaper*, 25 Nov. 1900.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ *Ibid.*; see also, Ferdinand Lundberg, *America's 60 wealthiest families* (New York, 1937).

²⁰ *Western Daily Press*, 5 Sept. 1889.

²¹ *Grantham Journal*, 25 Aug. 1906.

²² Algar Labouchere Thorold, *The life of Henry Labouchere* (London, 1913); *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 23 Dec. 1908.

²³ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 23 Dec. 1908.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

when Mr Spaulding was arrested after complaints from some of those paying for his services.²⁵ The *Derby Daily Telegraph* noted in 1908 that the aristocracy had acquired 'more enlightened views on marriage and its obligations' in recent years and that 'society brokers' were now 'actively and profitably employed.'²⁶

Ladies of standing were actively engaged in schemes by which they made introductions, either in letter form or in person, for select ladies who required a way into the social circle which comprised English society. A South African millionaire paid several thousand pounds for such a service. The scandal broke when the 'foolish lady' returned home and boasted about her visit to London and presentation at court.²⁷ A 1910 advertisement in the *Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer* noted that an 'Officer's daughter (London) can give best social introductions to society ladies and gentlemen with independent means.'²⁸ However, arrangements such as this were not new. Ten years previously *The Times* contained an advertisement where a 'lady of title' agreed to chaperone one or two young ladies for six weeks in Europe, the aim of which was to provide 'exceptional advantages and introductions' in return for 'liberal terms.'²⁹ The emphasis here was on American girls who wished to make their debut in London society, and securing the services of an aristocratic dame was the surest way of doing this.³⁰

The *Cheltenham Chronicle* warned that if peers 'of an ancient family succeed in escaping the sirens of the music-hall and the Gaiety stage, it is only to encounter in his more mature years the wily assiduity of the professional dealers who frequent another corner of the matrimonial market', namely, that of the wealthy American lady.³¹ There are two issues here: firstly, the issue of blood-lines and secondly the fact that certain individuals were prepared to make money out of facilitating these introductions. Newspapers warned of brokers who charged a substantial fee for their services.³² There was even a report in 1901 of a well-known New York marriage broker who had set up office at the West End Hotel in London, claiming that 'poor peers willing to marry wealthy Yankee girls of good

²⁵ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 27 Nov 1907

²⁶ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 23 Dec. 1908.

²⁷ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 24 Jun. 1899.

²⁸ *Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer*, 21 Jan. 1910.

²⁹ *Western Daily Press*, 5 Sept. 1889.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 15 Sept. 1906.

³² *Ibid.*

family...would serve a high political purpose, binding together by family ties the aristocracy of the dollar and the aristocracy of the blood.’³³ Naturally, the broker promised the utmost privacy and tact, but did state that his commission for his services would be based on a percentage of the income brought to the husband, and for the wife a fixed rate for the title she acquired.³⁴

When Consuelo Vanderbilt married the 9th duke of Marlborough, for instance, it was acknowledged that their introduction was by means of the dowager duchess of Marlborough, an American lady by the name of Lilian Price.³⁵ After the 8th duke’s death Lilian married again; Lord William Beresford, son of the marquess of Waterford, was her fourth husband. She took young Consuelo under her wing, accompanying her on her debut in London society.³⁶ With a three-million-pound dowry, which Consuelo brought to the marriage, she upstaged that of her predecessor, Lilian, whose dowry amounted to sixty thousand pounds left to her by her former New York merchant husband.³⁷ With such inflated dowries at play, it was little wonder that these vast sums captured the public imagination. One paper listed the fourteen largest dowries which had made their way into English aristocratic families, ranging from £200,000 to £1,400,000 and included Lady Arthur Butler and Lady Plunkett amongst the Irish nobility.³⁸ The *Cardiff Times* noted ‘in a general way it has been a square deal of dollars versus coronets.’³⁹ By 1911, perhaps as a means of undermining less than scrupulous introductions, and possibly as a result of the increased numbers of Americans in high-ranking positions, a new rule was implemented in the royal court, whereby presentations to the monarch had to be supported by the American ambassador. This rendered him ‘personally responsible for their social standing.’⁴⁰ Additionally, such presentations were now limited to twenty in one season.⁴¹

³³ *Lichfield Mercury*, 26 Jul. 1901.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ See Lundberg, *America’s 60 wealthiest families*, pp 3-23.

³⁶ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 11 Oct. 1895.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Hull Daily Mail*, 24 Apr. 1895; see also, Lundberg, *America’s 60 wealthiest families*, pp 3-23.

³⁹ *Cardiff Times*, 2 Nov. 1895.

⁴⁰ *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 18 Feb. 1911.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

‘Swallowed by members of the British aristocracy’⁴²

The *Dundee Courier* in 1895 claimed that for many years English women had reason to dread the rivalry of the American woman:

She arrives in England all smiles and with a beauty of a type that is far from English, for an American woman will never overdo the health and athletic craze as so many of our English beauties are tending to do. Her beauty of a wonderful delicacy when viewed alongside our robust young English maids is invariably enhanced by toilettes that are not even creations; they are inspirations, and there is a wonderful floating tale of dollars that sounds like a fairy story.⁴³

However, the writer was not surprised that many American men had become frustrated at the sight of their beautiful young women, not to mind their American dollars, ‘being swallowed by members of the British aristocracy not always as young as they might be, not always worthy rivals in other ways, but invariably titled.’⁴⁴ Certainly the British husband was getting the better end of the deal with his ‘worn and battered’ title, re-gilded with ‘pots of fresh American dollars’ while at the same time he obtained a young, beautiful, and accomplished American wife. The paper wondered if familiarity had bred contempt and American men, keen to keep their dollars for ‘their own matrimonial projects’ shunned marrying English wives. It was claimed that since 1859 when ‘the fashion was first set’ over two hundred million dollars had been brought to English shores by American wives, so it was unsurprising that America had grown ‘quite wearied of the little game of England.’⁴⁵

Evidence would suggest that some American fathers were not supporters of transatlantic marriages for their daughters. Frances Ellen Work, daughter of wealthy stockbroker Franklin Work, married the Hon. James Boothby Burke-Roche, (later 3rd Baron Fermoy) younger son of the 1st Baron Fermoy in 1880. The newlyweds returned to Ireland to settle down and had four children in quick succession, but it was a short lived happiness. Frances returned home to her father and issued divorce proceedings against her husband

⁴² *Dundee Courier*, 19 Jun. 1895.

⁴³ *Ibid.*

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*; see also, Lundberg, *America’s 60 wealthiest families*, p. 15.

on grounds of desertion. Franklin amended his will to disinherit Frances should she ever have contact with her husband again, or indeed if her sons were not raised in the United States.⁴⁶ His attitude to transatlantic marriages was clear in his obituary in 1911:

It's time this international marrying came to a stop for our American girls are ruining our own country by it. As fast as our honourable, hard working men can earn this money their daughters take it and toss it across the ocean. And for what? For the purpose of a title and the privilege of paying the debts of so-called noblemen! If I had anything to say about it, I'd make an international marriage a hanging offense.⁴⁷

His will stipulated that his twin grandsons would receive £600,000 each 'on condition that they became American citizens within a year of his death, and kept a permanent legal residence in the United States.'⁴⁸ Additionally, Cynthia Burke Roche, Franklyn's granddaughter, was forbidden to marry 'a foreigner or to visit Great Britain during the life of her father...under penalty of losing her share of the estate.'⁴⁹ Franklyn, in his extensive will, stated that he made these provisions for the 'protection of my daughter and grandchildren' believing that they could 'find enough to interest, instruct and amuse them...in the United States.'⁵⁰ Ironically, his eldest grandson, Edmund, succeeded his father as the 4th Baron Fermoy in 1920 and took his seat in the House of Commons representing King's Lynn. His younger brother, Francis, remained in New York where he managed his grandfather's immense properties.⁵¹ While many of the transatlantic marriages were certainly successful and based on a love relationship, others were formed out of crude social ambition, apparent on both sides of the Atlantic. Peers who entered these unions were better able to retain their reputations, perhaps because they were seen to be self-sacrificing for the sake of their floundering estates.⁵²

Other marriages had a more positive outcome; for example, the rags to riches story of the Grace family which highlights the American dream, and which in this case related to the

⁴⁶ Gail MacColl & Carol McD. Wallace, *To marry an English lord* (New York, 2012), p. 314; see also, *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 1911.

⁴⁷ *New York Tribune*, 1911, quoted in MacColl and Wallace, *To marry an English lord*, p. 314.

⁴⁸ *Western Daily Press*, 4 Nov. 1920.

⁴⁹ *New York Times*, 29 Apr. 1911.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail*, 18 Jul. 1928.

⁵² Montgomery, 'Gilded Prostitution', p. 152.

Irish peerage. William R Grace, born in Cork in 1832, was one of four brothers. He left Ireland aged fourteen working his way on a ship to New York where he became a butcher, but went on to become a twice elected mayor of New York and a multi-millionaire.⁵³ In 1850 he travelled to Peru as a clerk for a shipping company and within a few years was a partner in the firm. He sent to Ireland for his brother, Michael, and both established W.R. Grace & Co in New York in 1868, a merchant and financier trading company. The company expanded rapidly, with branches in London, San Francisco, Peru and Chile.⁵⁴ In 1898 a subsidiary was established, the New York and Pacific Steamship Company, with holdings of nitrate properties in Chile, sugar and cotton plantations in Peru, and railroad interests in both countries.⁵⁵ Michael P. Grace moved to London to run the branch of Grace Co, and it was here that his three daughters Elena, Eliza and Gladys were launched into English society. Known as the ‘Three Graces’ all married well, with Elena marrying the earl of Donoughmore, Richard Hely Hutchinson. Indeed the earl’s father, John, the 5th earl of Donoughmore, had spent three years in Peru as an associate of the Grace brothers and therefore it was ‘quite fitting’ that the families would unite.⁵⁶ The earl’s son and heir, Richard, fell for Michael Grace’s daughter Elena Maria ‘and her Peruvian dollars.’⁵⁷ The Grace brothers and Donoughmore had taken over the Peruvian national debt thus securing major concessions in return including the control of the railways for sixty-six years, navigational rights, amongst other deals estimated in millions.⁵⁸ Elena Hely Hutchinson, countess of Donoughmore was noted as ‘one of the most popular of the American wives of the British noblemen in London, while Donoughmore’s success in British politics was attributed to his wife’s ‘energy and popularity.’⁵⁹ Lady Elena was not the only Grace to marry into the Irish peerage. In 1909 Olive Grace, widow of Mr Henry Kerr of New York, Elena’s cousin, married Hon Charles Fulke Greville, 3rd Baron Greville.⁶⁰ Olive’s father John W Grace had been placed in charge of an estate purchased by his brother in the 1860s in Rathdowney, Queen’s County.⁶¹

⁵³ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 26 Jul. 1892; see also, *Northants Evening Telegraph*, 20 Apr. 1901; *Western Daily Press*, 3 Jan. 1885.

⁵⁴ *Oakland Tribune*. 21 Jan. 1911.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 17 Oct. 1903.

⁵⁸ Dave Hollett, *More precious than gold: the story of the Peruvian guano trade* (Cranbury, 2008), p. 19.

⁵⁹ *Oakland Tribune*. 21 Jan. 1911.

⁶⁰ *Manchester Courier & Lancashire General Advertiser*, 23 Nov. 1909.

⁶¹ *Oakland Tribune*, 21 Jan. 1911.

‘Outside fairyland one must have bread and butter’⁶²

In defence of the Anglo-American alliances, one unnamed peeress made her views known in an article printed in an American paper. She presented a list of what her husband brought to the union: ‘a peerage, a bad reputation, an encumbered estate, shady friends, endless debts, a broken constitution, an angelic temper and a matchless good nature.’⁶³ In return she had brought: ‘a fortune, good health, good looks, revived prosperity, and happiness.’⁶⁴ She also stated that ‘I have presented my husband and Debrett’s with several sons. They are going to be a credit to my adopted family and to the nation...My eldest son has a destiny to pursue which is not compatible with bridge-playing, horse-racing, supper-giving and sixty per cent interest-paying. He will live to see the day, I hope, when he will feel it incumbent upon himself to say over and over again, “Thank God my mother was an American.”’⁶⁵ Such a frank statement was perhaps not surprising and indeed writer, Lady Helen Forbes, daughter of the earl of Craven, commented that the resentment of the compatriots of American brides was based on the loss of their most desirable daughters and their equally desirable money.⁶⁶ However, she believed that distaste shown by the compatriots of bridegrooms was less reasonable, despite their assertions that there was a lack of eligible men for young ladies. Certainly claims that it ‘never was so before’ were simply untrue. According to Lady Helen: ‘several generations have lived and died since bad times drove English gentlemen to seek brides with bigger dowries than their own countrywomen could boast’ but ‘there is not a noble pedigree in the land that does not bear traces of it.’⁶⁷ While previous generations sought their wives amongst the West Indian heiresses of British extraction, the failure of the system was that many had ‘black ancestors lurking in the background’ something the modern American wives did not.⁶⁸ However, this was still a worry for some noble families and in particular, as will be discussed later, for Constance Leslie in relation to her son’s intended, Leonie Jerome. When Leonie Jerome began seeing Jack Leslie, her father was in an impoverished financial state, having lost most of his fortune. According to Clarissa Jerome, Leonie’s

⁶² *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1906.

⁶³ *St James’s Gazette*, 30 May 1903.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1906. Lady Helen Forbes, 1874-1926 was the daughter of George Craven, 3rd earl of Craven and Hon. Evelyn Laura Barrington, daughter of George Barrington, 7th Viscount Barrington of Ardglass, Co. Down, available at thepeerage.com [15 Apr. 2016].

⁶⁷ *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1906.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

mother, as Jack was not a man of means he was to be discouraged from courting Leonie.⁶⁹ She wished her daughter to make a marriage as advantageous as her sister, Jennie, who had married Lord Randolph Churchill. Pragmatically, while ‘romance is very nice, and in fairyland the first thing to be considered, but outside fairyland one must have bread and butter.’⁷⁰ While the *Lincolnshire Chronicle* in 1895 pointed out that not all American ladies brought handsome dowries, the assumption remained that they did.⁷¹

Lord James Arthur Butler (1849-1943) was the third son of the marquess of Ormonde, and when he married Ellen Sprague Stager, ‘the lioness of Chicago society’ in 1887, his older brother, James Edward, was the title holder. At the time of her marriage Ellen was stated to have ‘hooked a British title’ which was rather misleading.⁷² Lord James Edward Butler (1844-1919) had succeeded his father in 1854 at the age of ten years. In 1876 he married Lady Elizabeth Grosvenor, daughter of the duke of Westminster. By the time of her brother-in-law’s marriage to Ellen Stager, Elizabeth was only thirty years old and had two daughters aged eleven and nine. There was no reason to suppose that Elizabeth would not produce an heir in the future.

When Elizabeth Post (nee Wadsworth) married Arthur Smith-Barry in 1889, she did so without any prospect of a title. It was not until thirteen years later in 1902 that Arthur was raised to the peerage as Baron Barrymore and Elizabeth became Baroness Barrymore.⁷³ Similarly, when Terence Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood married Florence Davis in 1893, he was not in line to succeed to the marquissate of Dufferin and Ava. However, when his older brother Archibald was killed in South Africa in 1900, this changed the couple’s fate. When one examines the length of time some women had to wait to succeed to titles it questions the validity of the accusations that they were merely marrying for titles. Out of fourteen Irish-American marriages, only six acquired a title directly on marriage including Clanwilliam, Decies, Donegall, Donoughmore, Granard, and Greville. Of the other eight, Frances Work was divorced from her husband over thirty years before he was made Baron Fermoy in 1920. Josephine Hale did not become the countess of Cork for

⁶⁹ Kehoe, *Fortunes daughters*, p. 112.

⁷⁰ *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1906.

⁷¹ *Lincolnshire Chronicle*, 11 Oct. 1895.

⁷² *Peterhead Sentinel & General Advertiser for Buchan District*, 12 Jan. 1887.

⁷³ See Arthur Hugh Smith-Barry, 1st and last Baron Barrymore, available at thepeerage.com [15 Apr. 2016].

thirty-five years after her marriage, while Leonie Jerome and Marjorie Ide, and Ellen Stager had to wait thirty-two years to succeed to the Leslie and Ormonde titles respectively. Similarly, Florence Davis did not become marchioness of Dufferin for nine years. It can be argued that not all American women aspired to the premier female position within aristocratic families. Simply being married into aristocratic families evidently held its own appeal.

One of the more controversial aspects of these marriages was that they produced fewer children. The bishop of London had contended that the 'wilful failure' to have large families was a deliberate act on the part of the American wives, who preferred social distraction rather than motherhood and home.⁷⁴ Similarly, Lady Helen Forbes claimed the American woman was 'not a joyful mother of children. She seldom has a large family, two or three being her usual limit.'⁷⁵ While there may have been some truth to these assertions, it is important to note that the birth rates amongst the peerage had been dropping uniformly and not just amongst American wives. Of the American brides who married Irish title holders, Caroline Acheson, countess of Gosford had five children; Leonie Leslie, Frances Burke-Roche, Lady Ellen Butler, later the marchioness of Ormonde, had four children; Marjorie Leslie, Elena Hely Hutchinson, countess of Donoughmore, Florence Blackwood, marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, Helen Beresford, baroness Decies and Muriel Meade, countess of Clanwilliam, had three; Elizabeth Smith-Barry, baroness Barrymore, Violet Chichester, marchioness of Donegall and Lady Olive Greville, had one each. Josephine Boyle, later the countess of Cork, was the only lady to have had no children, but this was more likely to do with infertility rather than deliberately deciding not to produce an heir. In looking at women married before 1870, the birth rates from these marriages were considerably higher; fifty-eight children were born compared to twenty-two children born to marriages after 1870.⁷⁶ Of these, Catherine Beresford, baroness Decies had nine children while Emily Boyle, countess of Cork, Harriot Blackwood, marchioness of Dufferin and Elizabeth Meade, countess of Clanwilliam had seven children each.

⁷⁴ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 30 Dec. 1905.

⁷⁵ *Weekly Irish Times*, 28 Apr. 1906.

⁷⁶ See Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers*; see also, Gerard, *Country house life, family and servants, 1815-1914*.

In 1902, the 5th marquess of Donegall, George Augustus Hamilton Chichester, married for the third time at the age of eighty. His bride was thirty-year-old Canadian Violet Gertrude Twining a ‘pretty woman...and very rich.’⁷⁷ The ‘privileged few who attended the ceremony and the subsequent rejoicings commented upon his lordship’s sprightly air and erect bearing.’⁷⁸ The following year the papers announced that ‘the most remarkable romances of the British peerage’ had resulted in the birth of a son and heir.⁷⁹ There had been no direct heir to the marquissate despite the marquess having been married twice before.⁸⁰ The marquess married his first wife, Lucy Mure, in 1859 but the marriage was annulled four years later.⁸¹ His second marriage in 1865 to a shopkeeper’s daughter, Mary Anne Cobb, did not fare much better.⁸² The *Cheltenham Looker-On* reported in 1883 that Mary Anne was ‘unable to make her husband support her’ and she obtained a ‘precarious livelihood by giving lessons in the French language.’⁸³ A separation was granted to the couple after accusations of her intemperance and his involvement with other women, including one woman, Louisa Wright, by whom he had a child.⁸⁴ In 1898, Mary Anne sought admission to the Highgate Workhouse, leaving society incredulous that such a high status lady would have to suffer her Christmas dinner with ‘all the other paupers of the workhouse.’⁸⁵ His past affairs and numerous bankruptcy court appearances aside, the marquess died in 1904, and his son, Edward, thus became the 6th marquess at the tender age of seven months.⁸⁶

‘Romance vanishes before the reality of their habits’⁸⁷

The cultural differences between the English and American lady were frequently written about in the newspapers. One report claimed in the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* that an

⁷⁷ *Western Times*, 26 Dec. 1902.

⁷⁸ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 9 Oct. 1903.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*; *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 10 Oct. 1903.

⁸¹ *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 10 Oct. 1903; *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 10 Oct. 1903; *The Spectator*, 11 Jul. 1863.

⁸² *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 27 Oct. 1883; *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 16 Jun. 1885; *Northampton Mercury*, 23 Mar. 1889.

⁸³ *Cheltenham Looker-On*, 27 Oct. 1883.

⁸⁴ *Northampton Mercury*, 23 Mar. 1889; *South Wales Echo*, 22 Mar. 1889.

⁸⁵ *Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette*, 9 Oct. 1903.

⁸⁶ *South Wales Echo*, 2 May 1889; see also, *Chester Chronicle*, 2 Dec. 1854, regarding the court appearance of George Augustus Hamilton Chichester and his sister Augusta Ferrers on charges of inducing Miss Clara Thornton into a ‘contract of marriage with Mr. Chichester without the sanction of the Court of Chancery, and his having clandestinely attempted to remove her from the custody of her guardians.’

⁸⁷ *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 9 Apr. 1853.

invitation from the prince and princess of Wales to their garden party was turned down by a lady who had a prior engagement. The paper mocked her for not knowing that ‘Royal invitations in this country are commands.’⁸⁸ On other occasions American women were ridiculed for the manner in which they gained access to the Houses of Parliament. According to one paper they displayed ‘the ingenuity of their race’ by sending their calling-cards to any member whose name they were remotely familiar with and thereby gained access to parliamentary members and peers.⁸⁹ The *Cheltenham Chronicle* commented on the lack of ‘coaching’ two American ladies had whilst being presented to the princess of Wales. One lady kissed the princess’s extended hand, instead of the normal curtsy and slight shake of the hand.⁹⁰ While this practice of ‘baisemain’ was common amongst the aristocracy in Europe, in England only the queen demanded its exercise and then only on ceremonial occasions. A more scathing commentary on the American woman comes from a paper in 1853. In this early indictment of Americans, one rather caustic reporter wrote:

The ladies are generally very nice looking, but all romance vanishes before the reality of their habits, especially at meals. The mouth of an American lady is ever in danger of being widened by the knife she uses, or the instrument itself of disappearing with the food it carries to that ever-smirking hole. The women are delicately formed, with but little colour, and do not long retain their good looks, like women of a colder climate; they are, in themselves, cold and reserved, and with the exception of music, possess few accomplishments. Never, in one solitary instance, did I observe an American lady sketching or painting, or offering a passing remark on the beauties of nature.⁹¹

Their mannerisms were represented as gauche or inappropriate. There were continuous slights such as: ‘how beautiful your mother must have been in her youth.’⁹² Their obsession with money was considered by the media as bad manners: ‘the American has become so idealistic that he even idealises money.’⁹³ The women were targeted for the

⁸⁸ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 19 Jul. 1886; see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, pp 343-55.

⁸⁹ *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, 20 Jun. 1895.

⁹⁰ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 5 Sept. 1896.

⁹¹ *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 9 Apr. 1853.

⁹² *Western Daily Press*, 8 Feb. 1875.

⁹³ *London Daily News*, 6 Jul. 1907.

ostentatious wearing of diamonds during daytime which was considered ‘a vulgar piece of pretension.’⁹⁴ In 1898, the latest American fad of wearing a gold chain with thirty-six varieties of diamond locket on it was commented on in the newspapers: ‘only millionaires can afford such a chain.’⁹⁵ Lady Beatrice Ogden Mills, wife of the earl of Granard, one paper noted, had ‘made it *de rigueur* for unmarried girls to don diamonds and other precious stones’ which up to that point was the remit of more mature women.⁹⁶ Lady Violet Graham, wife of Baron Greville, once commented upon the ‘vast sums spent on the toilet[te]’ where the ‘variety and splendour of the young lady’s purchases seem to have astonished even the case-hardened shop assistants.’⁹⁷ Even gifts given by Americans were deemed excessive in comparison to English women. Lady Greville, who frequently wrote about Americans in her column in *The Graphic*, commented on the lavish expenditure on pets; one American lady in particular lavished so much on her terrier that the animal sat in a ‘high chair like a child’ and received gifts to mark its birthday such as toys, candy, and a silver plate to eat off.⁹⁸ Only six years later, Lady Greville witnessed her son’s marriage to an American, Olive Grace Kerr.⁹⁹

In 1895 the *Irish Times* compared American ladies and their European and English counterparts. The latter were renowned for their ‘singularly superficial’ education which to all intents and purposes comprised of sketching and playing the piano. They were healthy and exuberant due to their outdoor life where they excelled at riding and lawn tennis. Conversationally, they were ‘dull and uninteresting, and when once one attempts to broach any subject of general interest outside the narrow circle which constitutes their own particular world, and beyond which they never look they are hopelessly at sea.’¹⁰⁰ The article went on to criticise the acclaimed accomplishments of prominent ladies, dismissing the duchess of Leinster’s skill in bonnet trimming and the duchess of Sutherland’s proficiency as a pastry cook as talents unworthy of note. According to the paper their inclusion in articles merely heightened ‘the fact that gentlewomen are represented in the press for nothing other than their name.’¹⁰¹ By comparison an

⁹⁴ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 3 Dec. 1898.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ *Liverpool Echo*, 16 Mar. 1914; see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 345-6.

⁹⁷ *The Graphic*, 10 Feb. 1906.

⁹⁸ *The Graphic*, 17 Jan. 1903.

⁹⁹ *Canterbury Journal*, 11 Dec. 1909.

¹⁰⁰ *Irish Times*, 31 Dec. 1896.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

American girl was educated, proficient in several languages, and an excellent conversationalist in a wide range of topics. However, many of the differences between the transatlantic cousins came down to up-bringing, with English ladies suffering greatly from self-restraint and lack of emancipation.¹⁰²

Lady Violet Greville took the stance that the social and cultural differences were imbedded in class. Writing in her 'Place aux Dames' column in *The Graphic* she applauded American women for finding pleasure in their own sex: women lunched together, sat and talked with one another and paid one another 'pretty little compliments' unlike their English counterparts.¹⁰³ English women had only recently starting hosting luncheons and bridge parties without the assistance of their menfolk; up to then there was no class of leisured men in America, hence women had to organise themselves or they would be alone all day as their husbands were absent dealing with business. Violet Greville's observation was that single-sex endeavours did not have the same appeal amongst English women, particularly amongst those who had been away at school and had been deprived of the company of men. These women actively sought the company of men.¹⁰⁴

Americans in Ireland

One of the most prominent American families to arrive in Europe seeking good marriages was the Jerome family of New York. Mrs Clarissa Jerome along with her three daughters Clara, Jennie and Leonie moved from their home in Madison Square Garden initially to Paris and the court of Napoleon III. Leonard Jerome remained at home happy to indulge his hobbies of horses and opera. He was a Wall Street speculator who reputedly had made and lost three separate million dollar fortunes.¹⁰⁵ The Jerome sisters had charm, grace, and beauty, and all three were highly intelligent. Mrs Jerome was an heiress from an old New York family but despite this never achieved the social position she sought, allegedly due to rumours of having Iroquois blood in her lineage.¹⁰⁶ The Franco-Prussian war ended their Parisian venture and the ladies relocated to London where in 1873 Jennie met Lord Randolph Churchill. The resulting marriage propelled all three Jerome sisters into the

¹⁰² *Irish Times*, 31 Dec. 1896; see also, Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers*, p. 54.

¹⁰³ *The Graphic*, 10 Feb. 1906.

¹⁰⁴ *The Graphic*, 17 Jan. 1903.

¹⁰⁵ Kehoe, *Fortunes daughters*, p. xx.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

glamorous world of the British aristocracy. In 1881, Clara married Moreton Frewen, a handsome younger son of MP Thomas Frewen, who never quite reached his expected financial potential.

Jennie recalled that an American woman was ‘looked upon as a strange and abnormal creature, with the habits and manners something between a Red Indian and a Gaiety Girl.’¹⁰⁷ She was treated with suspicion or avoidance, though ‘her dollars were her only recommendation.’¹⁰⁸ The assumption was that all Americans were ‘supposed to be as loud and vulgar as their mothers were unpresentable, and the daughters undesirable – unless worth their weight in gold.’¹⁰⁹ Lady Frances Howard wrote to her mother regarding her cousin, the 6th earl of Wicklow, who had succeeded to the title in 1869: ‘Who could have put in the papers about Wicklow and Miss Jerome? I am so glad it is contradicted. The prettiest of the two sisters, might have been good enough for that little cad, Lord Randolph, but no vulgar Yankee, could be nice enough for Wicklow.’¹¹⁰ The *Blackburn Standard* had carried the piece in its General News section stating that ‘the approaching marriage is announced of the Earl of Wicklow and Miss Jerome, sister of Lady Randolph Churchill.’¹¹¹ Considered less beautiful than her sisters, Leonie had a ‘quiet charm and a sympathetic face’ and was perhaps the object of the outburst by Lady Howard.¹¹²

In 1884 Leonie the youngest Jerome sister married Jack Leslie, a handsome only son of Sir John Leslie and his wife Lady Constance Dawson-Damer. Leonie was an excellent horsewoman and a proficient piano player. Jack was artistic, particularly skilled at painting, but had no money of his own and, therefore, was not considered a likely marriage partner for the now financially constrained Jeromes. The Leslies fervently disapproved of Jack’s romance with the American woman and were intent on preventing the match. They had heard from a variety of sources that Jennie, Lady Churchill, was ‘very gay socially’ which translated to ‘unbecomingly fast’, while her mother was reported to be three-quarters Indian and her father a bus driver.¹¹³ The main reason for

¹⁰⁷ Mrs George Cornwallis-West, *The reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (New York, 1908), pp 60-1.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Francie Howard writing to her mother, 1 Dec., (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38,606/1 (1-6)).

¹¹¹ *Blackburn Standard*, 1 Dec. 1877.

¹¹² Kehoe, *Fortunes daughters*, p. 75; see also, Leslie, *Edwardians in love*, pp 200-5.

¹¹³ Kehoe, *Fortunes daughters*, p. 116.

the Leslie's objection was that Jack was an only son with four sisters who required suitable marriages, any hint of scandal, including an unfortunate marriage by Jack, could severely hinder their chances. The Leslies owned over 44,000 acres across Monaghan, Donegal, Tyrone and Fermanagh worth over £16,000 in 1883.¹¹⁴ Leonie and Jack, however, were undeterred by the opposition and set about the task of acquiring parental approval. Lady Constance was aware of the heartache caused to a couple where family disapproval was set against a match, as her own mother and father, Mary Georgina Seymour and the Hon. George Dawson-Damer, had run into such difficulties. She wrote:

I believe that Mrs Fitzherbert did not like her blood adopted daughter [Mary Seymour] marrying my father – the most handsome and charming of men but a younger son of an Irish Peer. He was sent to India for some years in hopes of the impression wearing off, but it only deepened on both sides and then it was allowed.¹¹⁵

However, Lady Constance appears to have set aside any empathy and commented to a relative that Jack was persistently imploring his father to consent to the marriage with 'this bleak girl.'¹¹⁶ She went on: 'her mother was a bar maid – father drove a bus before he rose to be a Hotel Keeper. These persons are pretty clever to have turned themselves into ladies.... But their...black blood and low family make it quite fateful to us...unless she brings a little golden crown with her which could be melted into guineas!'¹¹⁷ Two months later in October 1883 correspondence from her cousin Frederick Seymour revealed his delight on hearing that Jack's affair was over: 'you could not have taken to your arms the Yankee girl', he quipped.¹¹⁸ The following year, against his father's wishes, Jack sailed to New York with the express intention of marriage. Mr Jerome on the other hand was supportive of Leonie's decision and once he met Jack was happy to approve of the marriage.¹¹⁹ The ceremony was conducted early in October 1884. When the couple arrived back in London, Jack's maiden aunts, Julia and Emily Leslie, were sent to meet Leonie and inform the family of their verdict. Julia's complaint was that Leonie lacked a fringe while Emily had a more favourable report once she learned of Leonie's musical

¹¹⁴ John Bateman, *Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 267.

¹¹⁵ Transcripts of journals (by Shane Leslie) of Constance Leslie, 1870s-1880s, (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/113).

¹¹⁶ Letter from Constance Leslie, 17 Aug 1883, (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/31).

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ Frederick Seymour to Constance Leslie, 31 Oct 1883 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/31).

¹¹⁹ Kehoe, *Fortunes daughters*, p. 120.

talent.¹²⁰ The newlyweds resided with Leonie's sister, Jennie, and her husband, Randolph Churchill, at Connaught Place instead of at the Leslie's London residence at Stratford Place. They were, however, invited to Glaslough for Christmas, though Lady Constance had not changed her opinion at the end of the visit. Over time, the feelings of Lady Constance gradually improved and she later recounted how she had been swayed by 'mischief makers' that Leonie had little true feelings for her only son.¹²¹ Leonie for her part wrote to her mother-in-law many years later:

You write me such an extraordinarily kind letter here – I can't tell you how much I was touched by it. Do not ever regret any thing, as far as I am concerned. It was very natural you should want Jack to marry an English girl, when there were so many delightful ones to choose from – but from the moment you and I met – Do you remember a day Jack brought me to Stratford Place – it was Feb 14th 1885 – from that day – you have been invariably kind and sympathetic and we were friends at once and I've had 34 years, privileged years, of yours and the dear sisters in law in society and affection. So it has all turned out very happily!¹²²

Leonie gave birth in September of that year, 1885, to a son and heir John Randolph Shane, followed by three more sons in quick succession. That the future of the family line was secure can only have endeared Leonie to the Leslies.

Jack and Leonie's marriage was not the only transatlantic one to take place in Ireland. In 1909 Bernard Arthur William Forbes, 8th earl of Granard married Beatrice Mills, the granddaughter of the wealthy New York financier, banker, and horse breeder, Darius Ogden Mills. When he died he left an estimated twelve million dollars to his two children, his daughter Mrs Whitelaw Reid, wife of the American Ambassador in London, and his son Ogden Mills, father of Beatrice Forbes, countess of Granard.¹²³ Unlike the Leslie marriage, this union fulfilled the stereotypical idea of a wealthy heiress and impoverished aristocrat. Having inherited the title and estates in 1889 at the age fifteen, the Granard family fortunes were at a low ebb. The Granard family owned over 21,000 acres across

¹²⁰ Kehoe, *Fortunes daughters*, p. 121.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 123.

¹²² Leonie Leslie to Constance Leslie, 1919, (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44).

¹²³ *Aberdeen Journal*, 21 Jan. 1910; *Dundee Courier*, 19 Dec. 1930; *Boston Post*, 5 Jan. 1910. Beatrice Granard is reported to have received £2,439,947 and the title to the Mills mansion in Paris, in her father's will in 1930, see *Dundee Courier*, 19 Dec. 1930.

the three counties, of Longford, Leitrim and Wexford worth about £10,000 per year in 1883.¹²⁴ The family finances were remarkably restored upon Bernard's marriage to Beatrice.¹²⁵ The wedding ceremony was described by the newspapers as 'costly simplicity' while gifts to the bride included 'a cheque for 100,000 dollars from her father, the promise of a London town house from her grandfather, and a tiara of diamonds and pearls from her mother.'¹²⁶ The newly-weds honeymooned at Ogden Mill's mansion on the Hudson River, followed by a visit to Washington, before sailing for England where they took temporary residence at the earl of Dartmouth's house in Berkeley Square.¹²⁷ Granard was invested as a Knight in the Order of St. Patrick in 1909, and the earl and countess were special guests at a ceremony held in their honour in Dublin in November of that year. The countess was particularly welcomed by the dignitaries who were delighted to see that she 'intended to make her future residence amongst the daughters of Erin.'¹²⁸ It had only been mentioned in the press the previous month that the countess planned investing £20,000 renovating Castle Forbes, County Longford, and its grounds which had been sadly in a state of dilapidation for some time.¹²⁹ The earl and countess quickly made their mark too in London society where she was hailed as 'quite the most magnificent young heiress in Europe.'¹³⁰

Regarded as amongst the most prominent 'social leaders of the moment,' Lady Beatrice had a magnificent voice which had she chosen a vocation would have 'gained fame on the concert stage.'¹³¹ She was an 'active tennis player and a daring horsewoman...her jewels and dresses are a prolific source of admiration to writers on fashions in New York.'¹³² As her husband was Master of the Horse, she was automatically entitled to the use of royal horses and carriages and additionally could claim the services of a royal footman. These certainly would have added status to her as a prominent lady, particularly during the sitting of parliament when she and her husband entertained members of the

¹²⁴ Bateman, *Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland*, p. 190; see also, Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), pp 80-90 regarding the mortgage raised by the 7th earl from Maynooth College.

¹²⁵ Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p 142.

¹²⁶ *Irish Times*, 15 Jan. 1909.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

¹²⁹ *Weekly Irish Times*, 23 Oct. 1909.

¹³⁰ *Liverpool Echo*, 16 Mar. 1914.

¹³¹ *Ibid.*; *Lichfield Mercury*, 18 Dec. 1908.

¹³² *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 14 Dec. 1908.

Liberal party at their residence in Charles Street.¹³³ In June of 1909, Lady Granard hosted the National Women's Liberal Association at her London home which was attended by Mrs and Mr Asquith who met with delegates and received the guests along with their hostess.¹³⁴

Lady Beatrice was prominent in her attendance at royal occasions during the season, and frequently hosted dinner parties attended by royalty. During Ascot, the king was 'much diverted by the witticisms of Lady Granard.'¹³⁵ Noted for her dress sense, 'even for an American woman!' the Granards were among the inner circle surrounding the king and queen.¹³⁶ The couple's social approval was finally sealed in May of 1913 when the earl and countess hosted a dinner at their residence, Forbes House in Mayfair, which the king and queen attended. One newspaper commented that the couple were renowned for their 'splendid silver plate, and servants in knee breeches; and their Irish castle in County Longford is of the same stately character.'¹³⁷ The newspapers noted that 'the countess of Granard is a particularly warm favourite of Queen Mary, who, as a rule, does not approve of American ladies in English society.'¹³⁸ However, the *Irish Independent* of 1913 reported that prominent promotions within the British bureaucracy had often seen 'widespread prejudice which has previously been manifested against the nomination of Peers with American wives.'¹³⁹ The discussion centred on the successor to the duke of Connaught whose term of office as governor-general of Canada was due to expire in the autumn and there was an awareness of 'Canadian susceptibilities' being 'rather tender on the question of Americans in official positions.'¹⁴⁰ For this reason, though the earl of Granard was mentioned as a possible successor because of his diplomatic experience, his name did not 'find much favour.'¹⁴¹

Lady Granard's social success was not repeated by all American hostesses. By 1903 female society was fractured and under the leadership of two duchesses: the English-born duchess of Westminster, and the American-born duchess of Marlborough. The aristocracy

¹³³ *Yorkshire Evening Post*, 26 Jan. 1909.

¹³⁴ *Falkirk Herald*, 2 Jun. 1909.

¹³⁵ *Wells Journal*, 1 Jul. 1909.

¹³⁶ *Portsmouth Evening News*, 1 Feb. 1929.

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ *Longford Leader*, 2 May 1913.

¹³⁹ *Irish Independent*, 9 May 1913.

¹⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁴¹ *Ibid.*

arranged themselves under the banner of either. While the young duchess of Westminster had only commenced entertaining in London during the 1903 season, she reputedly looked ‘none too favourably on what is termed the American invasion,’ despite her sister-in-law, Lady Randolph Churchill being American.¹⁴² As a result, few Americans were in attendance at the ball held at Grosvenor House, the London mansion of the Westminsters.¹⁴³ This was the same ball at which Rose Boote made her debut as the marchioness of Headfort and became the ‘heroine’ of the evening.¹⁴⁴ One paper reported that the American guests took exception to the duchess’s invitations which requested replies to be sent to the secretary at Grosvenor House, a practice normally reserved for royal invites. Under the guidance of Consuelo, duchess of Marlborough, who acted as a ‘guide to all things social’ for the American society in London, this slip of etiquette was not appreciated.¹⁴⁵

In 1910 the papers reported the impending engagement of John de la Poer Beresford, 5th Baron Decies, to Miss Helen Vivian Gould, the seventeen-year old daughter of the American millionaire banker, George Jay Gould. Lord Decies had succeeded his brother the previous year and was now forty-four years old. The paper went on to report that he had met Miss Gould in 1909 when she was ‘still a school girl with short skirts and flowing locks,’ at the Gould home in New Jersey.¹⁴⁶ The Goulds refused to consider any engagement until their daughter had reached eighteen which was not until 1911.¹⁴⁷ However, in order to move things along the Goulds introduced Helen to New York society at a dinner hosted by her parents in January 1911 which was attended by her fiancé, and within a matter of weeks she was married.¹⁴⁸ The wedding in New York was a major spectacle in the city, with large crowds gathered outside St. Bartholomew’s church, Manhattan, to watch ‘the succession of nobilities as they drove to the church during the

¹⁴² *Hull Daily Mail*, 21 Aug. 1903.

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁴ Eimear Walsh, ‘Scandal in High Society’ available at the National Library of Ireland, <http://www.nli.ie/blog/index.php/2011/07/18/scandal-in-high-society/> [17 Nov 2014]; see also, *New York Times*, 2 August 1903; Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the Ascendancy*, p. 94.

¹⁴⁵ *Hull Daily Mail*, 21 Aug. 1903.

¹⁴⁶ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 28 Nov. 1910.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁸ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 20 Jan. 1911. Helen Gould was listed as being eighteen years old at the time of her marriage on 7 Feb. 1911. However, she would not have been eighteen until May of that year. See, marriage transcription for Helen Vivian Gould and John de la Poer Beresford, available at findmypast.co.uk [12 Mar. 2016].

ceremony.’¹⁴⁹ Such was the crowd that traffic had to be stopped and a hundred uniformed policemen secured the area for the 3,000 guests who were admitted by tickets only. Additionally, as Lord Decies had received threatening letters, accusing him of ‘fortune-hunting’ and another challenging him to a duel, security was likely increased.¹⁵⁰ In May of that year Helen Beresford, baroness Decies was presented at court, as per tradition. She had the honour of being one of the first American brides presented to King George.¹⁵¹ Three children were born to the couple and when the heir made his appearance in 1915 the event was heralded as one ‘of Anglo-American importance.’¹⁵² Despite a twenty-six-year age gap, the couple remained married until the death of Helen in 1931. Decies second wife, whom he married in 1936, was also an American, Elizabeth Wharton Drexel, daughter of Joseph W. Drexel founder of the Drexel Bank.¹⁵³ Certainly, having a wealthy wife was of benefit to Baron Decies, who set about refurbishing his English residence at Sefton Park, Bucks at a cost of £20,000.¹⁵⁴ By this stage, Baron Decies was noted as ‘one of the wealthiest men in the country, and when his widow died within months of him in 1944 she left an estate worth £279,238 including valuable diamond necklaces, tiaras, and other jewels.’¹⁵⁵

Another notable American peeress was Florence Davis, daughter of New York banker John H Davis who married Terence Hamilton-Temple-Blackwood later 2nd marquess of Dufferin and Ava in 1893. The couple met in Paris where the then Lord Clandeboye was attached to the British Embassy.¹⁵⁶ At the time of the marriage Florence had no reason to believe she would ever be marchioness as her husband was not the heir. However, after the death of his older brother during the Boer War, Terence succeeded on the death of his father in 1902. At that time the papers noted that she was ‘another of the fascinating American ladies who stopped the hearts of our English nobility, and reduced the daughters of British aristocratic houses to despair.’¹⁵⁷ The paper commented that the infusion into the blue-blooded English veins of ‘an appreciable mixture of American vitality and intellectual alertness,’ would increase England’s strength among the nations

¹⁴⁹ *Morpeth Herald*, 10 Feb. 1911.

¹⁵⁰ *Dundee Courier*, 4 Feb. 1911.

¹⁵¹ *Boston Sunday Post*, 18 Jul. 1915.

¹⁵² *Western Mail*. 26 Apr. 1915.

¹⁵³ *Somerset Daily American*, 14 Jun. 1944

¹⁵⁴ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 6 Nov. 1912.

¹⁵⁵ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 25 May 1936; *Derby Daily Telegraph*, 16 Jun. 1948.

¹⁵⁶ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 16 Mar. 1910.

¹⁵⁷ *Cambridge Independent Press*, 4 Apr. 1902.

of the world, particularly as a result of the close ties with America.¹⁵⁸ The unions and family alliances born from such marriages cemented the friendship between the two countries ‘and should be warmly approved.’¹⁵⁹ In 1910, Lady Dufferin who possessed a ‘charming soprano voice’ having been trained in Paris, took part in a public concert at the Bechstein Hall. Renowned for singing in private salons for charitable causes, Lady Dufferin hoped that her performance would enable her to ‘take public engagements in order to help the various charities in which she is interested.’¹⁶⁰

It is of note that these women did not forget their roots once married. Many made trips back to America to revisit their homes, families and friends. Elizabeth Wadsworth Post, daughter of General James Wadsworth of Genesco, New York and widow of Arthur Post, of the same city, married Arthur Smyth-Barry, later Baron Barrymore, in 1880. Lady Elizabeth travelled to New York in 1907 in the company of her thirteen-year-old daughter, Dorothy, for a brief visit.¹⁶¹ She stated: ‘I have not been here in fifteen years, and naturally I wanted my daughter to see the place where I was born and spent my childhood.’¹⁶² Lady Elizabeth was described as ‘one of the most charming of our American peeresses’ though her love of her home at Fota Island in Cork perhaps resulted in her not spending quite as much time in London society as others.¹⁶³ When Muriel Stephenson, widow of Oliver Howard, married Arthur Meade, earl of Clanwilliam in 1909, the couple honeymooned in France and then travelled on to the bride’s home country of Canada.¹⁶⁴ Other couples resided for many years in the US such as Josephine Hale and her husband, Robert Lascelles Boyle, later the earl of Cork, who only returned to Ireland from their home in San Francisco in the 1920s when Robert succeeded to the title.¹⁶⁵ Similarly Ellen Sprague Stager and her husband James Butler resided in Chicago after their Irish wedding where they had the comforts of a ‘splendid mansion’ purchased by Miss Stager’s late father.¹⁶⁶

¹⁵⁸ *Cambridge Independent Press*, 4 Apr. 1902.

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 2 Dec. 1910.

¹⁶¹ See, New York Passenger List available at www.findmypast.co.uk [1 Feb. 2016]

¹⁶² *Washington Post*, 13 Oct. 1907.

¹⁶³ *St James’s Gazette*, 6 Jul. 1904.

¹⁶⁴ *Manchester Courier*, 28 Apr. 1909.

¹⁶⁵ *Oakland Tribune*, 1934.

¹⁶⁶ *Peterhead Sentinel*, 12 Jan. 1887.

Conclusion

The preoccupation of newspapers during the Victorian era with American brides highlighted a societal change amongst the aristocracy. Daughters of American millionaires made unions with British peers, securing for themselves a title and social status, while they in turn provided funds to augment the dwindling finances of families of the aristocracy. These liaisons became so commonplace that a whole industry of 'matchmakers', individuals who would provide introductions and the like, sprang up to serve potential American wives. Newspapers ran articles listing those fortunate enough to have secured a titled husband, while others noted the wealth brought into the country by these marriages. Why were so many women willing to cross the Atlantic? One explanation is that society in New York was composed of an elite group of which Mrs Caroline Astor was the guardian. Her list of 'Four Hundred' comprising affluent socialites was exclusive to many.¹⁶⁷ Hence, the likes of Clara Jerome had to travel to Europe to mingle with the upper echelons, New York society being closed to her and her daughters. As Evangeline Holland has stated, Jennie's subsequent marriage to Lord Randolph Churchill: 'sealed the fate of the *nouveau riche* American heiress' by triggering 'the ambitions of social-climbing American millionaires.'¹⁶⁸

Over time there was certainly a softening of opinion in relation to American brides, but the overall impression was that the bloodlines were compromised for the sake of money. Irish newspapers were distinctly silent on the matter in comparison to British counterparts, and those articles that did appear took a more nuanced view. Between 1880 and 1912 there were fourteen marriages to Irish peers with only two ending in divorce. The decade between 1900 and 1910 saw the greatest number of transatlantic marriages totalling five and included: Elena Grace and John Hely Hutchinson, earl of Donoughmore, Violet Twining and George Chichester, earl of Donegall, Muriel Stephenson and Arthur Meade, earl of Clanwilliam, Jane Beatrice Ogden Mills and Bernard Forbes, earl of Granard, and Caroline Carter and Archibald Acheson, earl of Gosford.

Newspapers do not reveal why there were so few Irish marriages, but one could surmise that the pool was much smaller in Ireland. Kimberly Schutte claims that Irish titles were

¹⁶⁷ Kehoe, *Fortunes daughter's*, p. 9; see also, MacColl and Wallace, *To marry an English lord*.

¹⁶⁸ Evangeline Holland, 'The American Heiress' available at Edwardian Promenade <http://www.edwardianpromenade.com/women/the-american-heiress/> [15 Apr. 2016].

on the whole, less attractive than their English counterparts.¹⁶⁹ Significantly, according to FML Thompson, ‘the central core of the aristocracy continued on its settled course within conventions that defined compatibility and identified social equals.’¹⁷⁰ Overall in the Irish context, American brides were absorbed into the ranks of the aristocracy with ease. The majority of the Irish-American relationships flourished and produced heirs. Meanwhile, the English and American press continued to debate the pros and cons of such arrangements.

¹⁶⁹ See Schutte, *Marrying by the numbers*. See also, Wilson, *Women, marriage and property*, p. 5.

¹⁷⁰ Thompson, *The rise of respectable society*, p. 108.

Chapter 4: Noblesse oblige: the spirit of charity and benevolence

Considered an extension of the feminine role, aristocratic charity stemmed from the older traditions of paternalism and the notion of *noblesse oblige*, whereby privilege entailed responsibility. While diminished, the central obligations of honourable, generous and responsible behaviour associated with high rank and birth were still to be found. The benevolent activities of aristocratic women have frequently been dismissed as little more than a hobby of the idle rich, stereotyped under the characterisation of the ‘Lady Bountiful’; a woman who appears generous with her money and time but lacks any heart. While many ladies saw charitable obligations as a burdensome duty of their roles as chatelaines, others took their duties seriously, driven by the will to preserve harmony and loyalty in the environs of their country estates.¹ Reciprocity was the implicit outcome of the traditional donor/receiver relationship. This relationship also had the potential to be a form of social control, with deference and loyalty expected by the donor. Amongst the children of the aristocracy, mothers instilled a sense of duty and care towards the needy, perpetuating the cycle from one generation to the next. This also had the effect of legitimising charitable endeavours as social norms, where the poor received assistance based on the terms of the donor. The objective in this chapter is to provide an insight into the personal activities of Irish aristocratic women within their locale.

‘Each estate was a kingdom’²

Aristocratic women were neither frivolous nor disconnected from their charitable endeavours but rather engaged in activities which were within the societal notions of propriety and femininity. Lady Violet Greville saw country life as one where ‘land-owners lived quietly most of the year on their estates, unhurried and unflurried, they knew and respected their tenants personally, giving honour to whom honour was due.’³ Thus generational continuity and tradition reinforced a powerful attachment on many country estates. Newly married brides for example were required to assume the traditional duties associated with their husband’s family, to step ‘into established customs and duties’ which

¹ Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914 a social history*, p.84; see also, Augustus J Hare, *The story of two noble lives being memorials of Charlotte, Countess Canning and Louisa, marchioness of Waterford* (London, 1898).

² Somerville and Ross, *Irish memories*, p. 68.

³ Lady Violet Greville, *Vignettes of memory* (London, n/d), p. 282.

revolved around the home and family.⁴ They were expected to be involved in education, and the maintenance of the church on their estates and benevolence.⁵ The latter comprised an array of activities from dispensing alms, food, and clothing, to providing advice and basic assistance.⁶ For some women, such as Elizabeth countess of Fingall, taking on this monumental task was postponed. She wrote that ‘fortunately not much was expected of me with regard to the duties of mistress’ and her unmarried sisters-in-law continued to run the house with the assistance of the housekeeper.⁷ Leonie Leslie noted in 1885 on a visit to her future home of Glaslough that her husband’s sisters were: ‘awfully good about going among the poor tenants and giving them things, and at Christmas they distribute blankets and knitted things among all the poorer ones.’⁸ Thus the future Lady Leslie was initiated into the ways of her husband’s family and two years later, she had accepted her ‘rural life’ which encompassed visiting the tenants and taking them soup.⁹

There is much evidence that children of the aristocracy were socialised from an early age for their roles as members of the elite, part of which included benevolence towards the poor. Accompanying their mother or female relatives on charitable visits to estate cottages, assisting with acts of benevolence and participating in fund-raising activities in the community reinforced the ideals and function of their class. In 1909 Bernard, Baron Castletown’s niece, Kathleen Tighe, informed him of a children’s concert held at Christmas time in her locality in which she played a piano solo, and sang in a chorus: ‘our little concert was a great success and we made 9 or 10 pounds. This we are giving to the League of Pity, a branch of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children, of which League we are all members.’¹⁰ Similarly Mary, countess of Meath was keen to promote the tradition of benevolence in her children. Her diary in 1886 noted the christening of her sixth child Violet Constance: ‘her name will, I hope some day [sic] remind her of what a ministering child should be, humble and constant.’¹¹ During their

⁴ Jessica Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’ in *Victorian Studies* (1987), p. 193.

⁵ Steinbach, *Women in England 1760-1914 a social history*, p. 84.

⁶ *Ibid.*; see also, Gerard ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, p. 184.

⁷ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 96; see also, Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, p. 193.

⁸ Leonie Leslie to Eva Thompson, 1885 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38).

⁹ Leonie Leslie to Eva Thompson, 11 Oct. 1887 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38).

¹⁰ Letter from Kathleen Tighe to Bernard Castletown, 27 Dec 1909, (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, Ms. 34, 168(9)).

¹¹ Reginald Brabazon, (ed.) *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath* (London, 1900), p. 88; see also, Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, p. 193.

formative years, the Brabazon children were shown first-hand how position, class, wealth and status could be used for the benefit of the less well off. It was with this in mind that Lady Meath established the Ministering Children's League in 1885, whose aim was the promotion of 'kindness, unselfishness, and the habit of usefulness among children of every class...and to create in their minds an earnest desire to help the needy and suffering.'¹² With 35,000 members in the British Isles, Canada, India and Australia by 1891, the League members aspired to 'do at least one kind deed every day.'¹³ At Slane Castle, Co. Meath, Frederick and Mildred, children of the marquess of Conyngham, organised a fete at the castle, under the careful watch of their mother, in order to raise funds for a district nurse in the locality.¹⁴ In all they realised £60 for this endeavour. Edith Somerville keenly remembered her mother collecting money in order to purchase clothes and food for the destitute around her home. The women of the area came twice-weekly to the kitchen at Drishane, summoned by her representatives, including Edith, who rode through the 'distressed townlands' locating those 'who seemed in worst need.'¹⁵

However, for one child of the ascendancy, Clodagh Beresford Anson, her mother's endeavours possibly went too far. As the daughter of the 5th marquess of Waterford, she recalled that she and her siblings were always badly dressed as their mother spent all her allowance helping those down on their luck. Her mother's 'usual reason for going to any dressmaker at all was the fact that the latter was starving, probably because she was so bad that no one else would go to her.'¹⁶ Care of the poor was a doctrine inculcated from a very young age. It was seen as part of the responsibility of the aristocracy towards others, undertaken at least as part of aristocratic duties but 'incorporated in such a way to maintain the very fabric of society.'¹⁷

For Georgina, dowager Viscountess Gormanston, nothing provided her with greater joy than visits to her marital home, Gormanston Castle in Co. Meath. She frequently reminded her son, Jenico, to carry out particular tasks, such as ensuring the safe delivery of a

¹² *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 7 Feb. 1891.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ *Meath Chronicle*, 18 Sept. 1909.

¹⁵ Somerville and Ross, *Irish memories*, p. 144.

¹⁶ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 47.

¹⁷ K.D. Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1988), p. 104.

Christmas tree to the school mistress.¹⁸ She impressed upon Jenico to make sure the family of ‘Old Richard’, presumably a tenant or servant, were being looked after and she praised him for providing coal for his family.¹⁹ In a similar manner, the continuation of traditions and conventions such as Jenico’s speech to his tenantry on his homecoming after his marriage, was worthy of a letter from Lady Georgina. She advised that he should express his joy ‘to be amongst them and thank them for their kind reception of you and your wife.’²⁰ Similarly, other family occasions such as births, coming of age and deaths were marked by the family and their tenants in a display of deference and loyalty. In 1891, Mary, Lady Meath, recorded that upon her return to Ireland, one of the first things carried out in celebration of her son’s coming of age was: ‘to entertain the whole of our Irish tenantry and employees, between three hundred and four hundred in number, at a dinner on Jan 15th.’²¹ These rituals were so important that if the master and mistress were away from their estate, others stepped in to ensure protocol was adhered to. While her son and his family were away, Lady Georgina Preston slipped back into the role of mistress with ease, delighting in the busy role once more. She wrote: ‘I have the tenants spread on Monday ...the villagers on Saturday (they can make a day of that and have the bonfire at night – it will be huge).’²² Even during the fatal illness of her husband, Hermione, duchess of Leinster made sure that the normal Christmas charity to those in want was provided as usual in her absence. She provided a list of the poor widows who were to receive blankets and other items and requested that any additional individuals in want should be included.²³

For some women the ties to their marital home and surrounding area remained strong even after they moved on or when they became dowagers. Lucretia, Lady Gormanston’s familiarity with tenants and villagers is evidenced from her writings as was her concern towards their well-being. She lamented the passing of old familiar faces in the village and on her infrequent visits back to Gormanston from London, took pleasure in meeting and visiting former employees and catching up on the deaths, marriages and births in the

¹⁸ Georgina, Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 11 Jan. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/1); see also, Gerard, *Country house life, family and servants, 1815-1914*, p. 86.

¹⁹ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 23 Jan. 1912, (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/1).

²⁰ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, c.1911 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44, 426/3).

²¹ Brabazon, (ed.) *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 123.

²² Georgina, Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 13 Nov. 1911 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/1); see also, Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, p. 206; Alison Jordan, *Who cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Antrim, n.d.), p. 211.

²³ *Irish Times*, 4 Dec. 1893.

area.²⁴ Her letters are full of snippets of information regarding the environs of Gormanston Castle and display a keen interest in keeping up to date with the local happenings in her absence. She was presumably referring to an estate worker when she wrote in 1886: ‘poor Andy Floody died last week of paralysis of the brain...it is very sad for his two girls, left penniless, the eldest 16, a very quiet good girl....what can be done for them.’²⁵ K.D. Reynolds has concluded that since many charitable activities continued long after the introduction of the Poor Laws in 1838 it shows a reluctance by aristocratic women to abandon their ties and obligations.²⁶ However Jessica Gerard argues that the changing attitudes towards poverty which placed such charity within public responsibility nullified the rationale for cottage visiting and personal benevolence by aristocratic ladies.²⁷ It could be argued that in an Irish context where poverty, disease and economic hardships were prevalent among the poor, there may have been a continuing necessity for chatelaines to continue personal charity. Or perhaps the tradition was so engrained and bonds of interdependence between the lady of the country house and her dependants so entwined, that its removal was impossible.

Pleas for assistance

Applications made to aristocratic women for assistance frequently took the form of requests for money, work or goods.²⁸ It is difficult to gauge the amount of applications received or their success rate due to the fact that the surviving evidence is sparse. Of those letters that do survive in the collections, the responses to most requests are not recorded. What is evident is that pleas for assistance remained common throughout the period, which leads to the assumption that all parties concerned considered it the norm.²⁹ By utilising their extensive network of family, friends and acquaintances, aristocratic women were well placed to find employment for their estate dependents and servants.³⁰ Augusta, Lady Clonbrock wrote a reference regarding a former housemaid in 1905 for her acquaintance, Mrs Knox, who was having a crisis retaining servants. Despite an unspecified fault in the housemaid’s character, Mrs Knox was willing to give the girl a

²⁴ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 1884 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

²⁵ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 24 Feb. 1886 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44, 422/2).

²⁶ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, p. 103.

²⁷ Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, p. 202; see also, Gerard, *Country house life, family and servants, 1815-1914*, pp 123-9.

²⁸ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, p. 109.

²⁹ See Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, pp 183-209;

Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, p 107.

³⁰ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, p. 107.

trial as: ‘we fear getting one that would be worse, and we must hope she has perhaps had a lesson in leaving you and may do better in the future.’³¹ In 1903 Lady Clonbrock received a letter regarding a girl called Delia Finerty on the off-chance of obtaining a position. The writer was keen to stress that the ‘girl who I am sure will give great satisfaction, if your ladyship thinks well of taking her. She is nicely educated and particularly good at needlework.... as there is a large family of them at home.’³² While these examples indicate mistresses helping one another in relation to staff, others show a deeper intent. Lucretia, Lady Gormanston contacted her son, Jenico, to enquire if he or any of his friends needed a good gardener. She wrote that Lord Templemore’s new second wife was partial to English servants and dismissed all those who had been employed under the first Lady Templemore.³³ The gardener, Willie Stentson, had been a particular favourite of his former mistress who had approved of his good workmanship.³⁴ Unfortunately, the papers in this case do not inform on the outcome of the fate of Willie Stentson. However, what is interesting about this case is that Lucretia, Lady Gormanston took it upon herself to seek a position from within her network, for an employee of a deceased friend. As alluded to above, Lucretia was also concerned about the orphaned daughters of her tenant, Andy Floody. Her solution for their plight was that they should ‘go to service’ and she set about writing to Mrs Watt regarding the matter.³⁵ In a similar manner Leonie Leslie wrote in 1887 to her American cousin, Ena Thompson, seeking a position for the head carpenter on the Glaslough estate. The man, Anderson, had worked for the Leslies for over fifteen years and was emigrating ‘on account of domestic troubles!’³⁶ Leonie highlighted his attributes as a skilled workman and foreman in building and stated that ‘he is fully qualified for a position of trust...the family never found any fault in him – sober, honest and clever.’³⁷ She asked Ena to recommend Anderson to some of her and her husband’s friends in order to secure the man a position and noted that her mother-in-law, Lady Leslie was also writing letters on his behalf.³⁸

³¹ Mrs H Knox to Lady Clonbrock, 13 Jan. 1905 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792 (8)).

³² A. McKeigne to Lady Clonbrock, 10 Nov. 1903 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers MS 35,792 (7)).

³³ Harry Spencer Chichester, 2nd Baron Templemore married Laura Caroline Paget in 1842 as his first wife. She died in Dec. 1871 and two years later he married Lady Victoria Elizabeth Ashley, daughter of the 7th Earl of Shaftsbury, Anthony Ashley-Cooper.

³⁴ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 28 Mar. 1874 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/1).

³⁵ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 24 Feb. 1886 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44, 422/2).

³⁶ Leonie Leslie to Ena Thompson, 10 Nov. 1887 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38).

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Naturally, employment was not the only assistance requested from individuals. Women's influence was sought and they often acted as intermediaries or sought to resolve tensions. Eileen, Lady Gormanston asked her husband: 'will you order White to give rabbits occasionally to Lizzie Marten – He has a down on the Martens; and I have reason to know from other occasions that he shows his personal likes and dislikes when distributing our things among the villagers – which is a bit thick!'³⁹ At a later date when Mr White died, Mrs Milton asked Lady Gormanston for the tenancy of White's house, despite the fact that Mrs White was still residing on the property. Evidently there was some talk in the locality of Mrs White returning to her kin in the north of Ireland but Eileen was quite indignant at Mrs Milton's forwardness: 'Fancy Mrs Milton came to ask me the other day to ask you if you would let her have White's house!!'⁴⁰ Similarly Lady Lucretia Preston asked her son Jenico to use his influence to obtain medical treatment for the child of Sergeant Cane. While Mrs Cane had written to the viscountess, it is perhaps interesting to note that female-to-female correspondence was the more appropriate route in order to secure assistance. However, Lady Lucretia stated to Jenico that she had: 'used up my influence lately, could you get him into the Meath or anyone under your supervision' which perhaps sheds a different light on her request.⁴¹ In Galway, John Byrns, a tenant on the Clonbrock estate sought Lady Clonbrock's assistance in securing a place for his wife in a Dublin hospital which would be her only chance of survival from her illness.⁴² Similarly in 1881 a 'humble tenant' sought her influence regarding the Clonbrock school where her children were being treated poorly by the Ahascragh children and the teacher was turning a blind-eye to the incidents. The tenant noted that without intervention, her children would have to go attend a school three miles away, rather than the local one.⁴³ There was no material benefit to the mistress of an estate addressing these requests. However, attempts by the mistress to do so cultivated good will, loyalty and trust. This was a reciprocal relationship which benefited the estate and locale and contributed towards a more harmonious existence between landlord and people. In 1883 Lady Mary Brabazon, (later countess of Meath) noted that 'the people are apparently very appreciative' after

³⁹ Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 25 Aug. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers MS 42,427/7).

⁴⁰ Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 8 Oct. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 42, 427/7).

⁴¹ Lucretia Preston to Jenico Preston, n.d. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/1); see also, Howard Newby, 'The deferential dialect' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. xvii, no. ii (1975), p. 151; Michael L. Satlow (ed.), *The gift in antiquity* (Chichester, 2013), p. 5 in relation to gift-theory.

⁴² John Byrns to Lady Clonbrock, Apr. 1914 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 792 (7)).

⁴³ Letter from a 'humble tenant' to Lady Clonbrock, 29 May 1881 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35 792 (3)).

improvements on the estate.⁴⁴ In 1901 on the occasion of her marriage Clodagh Beresford was moved by a gift of an egg from a poor elderly woman in the district. As the woman had only one hen, Clodagh recognised the significance of the egg and the thought behind the woman's gesture.⁴⁵

Requests for financial support came in two forms: directly appealing for assistance or in exchange for goods. William Savage a former employee of Lady Clare Castletown, wrote that he was in dire straits, paralysed, unemployed and with no-one to turn to: 'I don't know what to do unless I do away with myself that is all that remains now.'⁴⁶ He asked for a loan of 30 shillings to purchase an organ so he could play on the streets and earn a living, and apologised for having burdened her with his troubles. Evidently moved, Clare Fitzpatrick, baroness Castletown wrote to her husband regarding 'poor Savage'. 'I am sending him £3...but of course that's nothing...I don't know whether the Charity Organisation Society would do anything but I am giving him their address.'⁴⁷ To put this into perspective: in 1894 the average weekly wage in Ireland was approximately nine shillings.⁴⁸ Within a week William wrote again, this time to thank Lady Castletown for her cheque and kind letter: 'It will enable me to get some warm clothing for the winter which I have lost it all, having been taken away during the year I was in bed in Scotland...I beg to thank you a thousand times over for your very great kindness.'⁴⁹

Amongst the Clonbrock Papers a letter from Margaret M Leahy offered Lady Clonbrock the opportunity to purchase sheet music, the sale of which was Miss Leahy's only means of support. Unusually, an annotation on the letter states that a Postal Order for 3 shillings was sent.⁵⁰ Whether one knows the outcomes of many of these requests is in itself immaterial when one ponders the reasons for their presence in the first place. It can be argued that the patron-client tie was a significant motivation when help was required. That these requests continued to arrive to the chatelaines of country estates into the twentieth

⁴⁴ Brabazon, *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 66.

⁴⁵ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 154.

⁴⁶ William Savage to Lady Castletown, 28 Aug. 1907 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166(8)).

⁴⁷ Clare Castletown to Bernard Castletown, 29 Aug. 1907 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166(8)).

⁴⁸ Thomas E Jordan, 'The quality of life in Victorian Ireland 1831-1901' in *Hibernian Review*, vol. vi, no. i, (2000), pp 103-121 here p 109. For domestic wages see Terence Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001), pp 157-9.

⁴⁹ William Savage to Lady Castletown, 2 Sept. 1907 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166(8)).

⁵⁰ Margaret M Leahy to Lady Clonbrock, 8 Oct. 1892 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792 (4)).

century, shows that these forms of patronage continued to be important to those in the wider community.⁵¹

The mores of Victorian society that promoted self-improvement, hard work and frugality affected all facets of life and were particularly prominent in the dealings of the upper-classes with the poor. One method of ingraining this in the lower-classes was through education, which was promoted and supported by the noble families of each district. Ladies patronised the schools and as part of this role, they made inspections, and provided treats and prizes to the children many of which were reported in local newspapers.⁵² However, endeavours regarding school children did not always receive the reception with which they were intended. In 1889 Maria La Touche, sister of the earl of Desart and a member of the Kilcullen Dorcas Society noted that the group had organised a Christmas tree and food for some festivities for the children of the area.⁵³ (The Dorcas Society originated in Britain in the nineteenth century, and was mainly concerned with providing clothing for the poor through a network of prestigious members who organised subscriptions, while its working members made garments.⁵⁴) Due to the objection of the local R.C. parish priest and his refusal to attend the organised gathering, the Catholic children were prevented from being present. Nevertheless, Mrs La Touche noted that the food would ‘be distributed without any demonstration.’⁵⁵ Lady Violet Greville, encountered similar religious disharmony when she started up school teas in her community of Delvin, Co Westmeath. Surprised at finding that most of the local children could not read she was determined to make improvements. Having been successful with similar endeavours in England, she found that in Ireland her attempts were less so, with a prevalence of girls attending school and learning to read; she noted: ‘boys apparently despised learning.’⁵⁶ Undaunted, she ‘invited the Catholic priest and the Protestant minister to assist at these little gaieties and give away the children’s prizes, but they

⁵¹ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain*, p. 110.

⁵² *Leinster Express*, 7 Jan, 1893; see also, Letter from Maria La Touche to Miss Young, Feb. 1893 in Margaret F. Young, (ed.) *The letters of a noble woman, Mrs La Touche of Harristown* (London, 1908), p. 139.

⁵³ Margaret F. Young, (ed.) *The letters of a noble woman, Mrs La Touche of Harristown* (London, 1908), p. 139.

⁵⁴ Vivienne Richmond, *Clothing the poor in nineteenth-century England*, (Cambridge, 2013), p. 216.

⁵⁵ Maria La Touche to Miss Young, Feb. 1893, in Young, (ed.) *The letters of a noble woman, Mrs. La Touche of Harrison*, p. 130.

⁵⁶ Greville, *Vignettes of memory*, p. 84.

declined to meet each other' but only the parish priest turned up.⁵⁷ Her persistence proved somewhat successful and the following year she noted an improved attendance. Edith Somerville ran into similar problems in Cork when the local Catholic priest vetoed her planned entertainment for the local school children. Undaunted Edith went around the locality and rounded up some children who were treated to 'tea, bread and jam and barm bracks, with races afterwards.'⁵⁸ The level of engagement in acts of private benevolence varied from lady to lady. Similarly, the types of endeavours undertaken by aristocratic women was diverse and wide-ranging. For many, limiting their activities to the demesne and locality where they undertook interests in the schools, churches, fetes, fairs and bazaars was the apex of their involvement. Others, however, ventured out into county-based activities.

There is little evidence of how recipients perceived the assistance of their benefactresses. Women such as Lady Lucretia Preston, who took an active interest in the welfare of their tenants and staff, lamented that it was seldom anyone remembered 'those that have been kind to them'.⁵⁹ According to Jessica Gerard those in receipt of assistance from the landlord's wife, were 'more genuinely deferential and expected assistance as a right,' hence they were less likely to 'resent interference.'⁶⁰ Gerard argues that comforts and assistance were welcomed by recipients as an 'appropriate response'.⁶¹ When Florence, daughter of Lieutenant Colonel Edward Tenison of Kilonan Castle, Co. Roscommon, married Henry King, 8th earl of Kingston, in January 1872, a delegation of the tenantry on her father's estate presented her with an address and gift in honour of her nuptials. The delegation included both Protestant and Catholic clergymen of the parish who expressed delight that she and her future husband were going to take up residence on the estate. Significantly, they hoped she would continue to 'dispense those benefits to the tenants and charities amongst the poor' and commended her for her 'lively interest which you have always taken in the schools of this parish; under Lady Louisa Tenison [her mother] and your supervision and patronage.'⁶² The delegation concluded by presenting her with a testimonial of 'the great respect and affection' in which she was held. Florence thanked

⁵⁷ Greville, *Vignettes of memory*, p. 84.

⁵⁸ Somerville and Ross, *Irish memories*, p. 162.

⁵⁹ Lucretia Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 7 Sept 1877, (N.L.I. Gormanston Papers, MS 44,422/2).

⁶⁰ Gerard, 'Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy', p. 192.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 200.

⁶² *Saunders's Newsletter*, 27 Dec. 1871.

the members for the gift of a diamond bracelet, adding that she would wear it often and ‘think of the kind friends among whom I have passed my childhood.’⁶³ She added: ‘I trust I may always prove worthy of the sentiments you have so kindly expressed’ and ‘how deeply I feel this touching proof of their attachment to my father and his family.’⁶⁴

The move into the public sphere

Aristocratic women made three significant contributions to organised and structured charitable organisations: providing financial assistance, using social occasions for charitable purposes and permitting the use of their name in association with certain good works.⁶⁵ One only has to look at the newspapers of the time to find evidence of subscribers, attendees and patrons to a host of charitable endeavours who belonged to the aristocracy. While it was also not acceptable for women of a high rank to engage in activities which were deemed below their status, boundaries were changing and the lines were becoming more blurred towards the end of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ It is notable that some women actively used their wide social networks to raise funds for their particular charitable activity. Lady Clonbrock received financial contributions from her extended female relatives including Louisa Tighe in Kilkenny who contributed to Lady Augusta’s Irish Distressed Ladies branch, and Jane Mahon who donated to Lady Clonbrock’s Nurses Fund.⁶⁷ A further extension of their influence was their role as hostesses at leading social gatherings. They had the means to organise such occasions, and the lavish homes and gardens in which to entertain, and run garden-parties, bazaars and fetes. According to K.D. Reynolds these events played a dual function in that they acted as social events and fund-raisers. Moreover, these gatherings also facilitated ‘local treating’ which, as already discussed, was part and parcel of the role of the aristocratic lady.⁶⁸ Unfortunately it is unclear from the records how these occasions played out as letters barely touch on such matters. Most ladies only refer to the bazaar or garden-party by intimating how busy or

⁶³ *Saunders’s Newsletter*, 27 Dec. 1871.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian England*, p. 107; see also, Cullen Owens, *A social history of women in Ireland, 1870-1970*, pp 57-9 and pp 72-8; Jordan, *Who cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast*, pp 215-21.

⁶⁶ See Sawyer, *We are but women, women in Ireland’s history*; see also, Maria Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995); Gerard, ‘Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy’, pp 183-209.

⁶⁷ Jane Mahon to Lady Clonbrock, 1890, and Louisa Tighe to Lady Clonbrock, 1895 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792 (3)).

⁶⁸ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian England*, p. 114.

how hard working they were in the run up to an event. Letters omit the salient details of the occasions themselves. Other sources indicate that goods for sale were frequently small items manufactured locally, such as needlework or knitted attire. It seems implausible that such items would garnish either the homes or person of the aristocratic woman, and much more likely that if purchased by them they would be donated for the next bazaar or fete. If items of clothing were involved it seems likely they would be given to the needy in the community.⁶⁹ Clodagh Anson in her memoir states that her grandmother, a frequent dignitary at bazaars, would accumulate an array of babies' woollen boots and tea-cosies. The items were then placed in a special cupboard at her home until donated to the next bazaar: 'They made a continuous round from one bazaar to another, which was just as well, as they were of no use for anything else.'⁷⁰

Until the latter part of the nineteenth century few women took prominent roles in organised public charities. From 1906 Lady Clare Fitzpatrick was making enquiries regarding a district nurse, writing to the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute in Dublin. A jubilee nurse was professionally trained and qualified and her performance in the community was inspected twice a year by the organisation. With costs of about £100 per year, this money was expected to be gathered from subscriptions and contributions in the locality. Many letters to Lady Castletown in 1906 refer to how the nurse operated, details of salaries, and main subscribers from districts near Doneraile.⁷¹ The Lady Dudley's Fund only provided capital for district nurses for the 'absolute poorest parts' of the country thus closing off

this avenue of support to Lady Castletown's scheme in Doneraile.⁷² The following year, 1907, saw the engagement of a jubilee nurse in Doneraile, and after an inspection by the institute in May of that year it was found that: 'Nurse Doyle is much appreciated by her patients. The books and equipment were in very good order'.⁷³ By 1909 Lady Castletown

⁶⁹ Reynolds, *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian England*, p. 115.

⁷⁰ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 97.

⁷¹ G. Greenfield to Mr Hanly, 23 Mar. 1906 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166 (7)); P.A. Sheehan to Lady Castletown, 26 Mar. 1906 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166 (7)); Colonel Campbell to Lady Castletown, 29 Mar. 1906 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166 (7)); Geraldine to Lady Castletown, n.d., (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166 (7)).

⁷² Letter to Lady Castletown, 23 Mar. 1906 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34 166 (7)); see also, Ciara Breathnach, 'Lady Dudley's district nursing scheme and the Congested District Boards, 1903-1953' in Margaret H. Preston and Margaret O' hOgartaigh (eds.) *Gender and medicine in Ireland, 1700-1950* (New York, 2012), pp 138-153.

⁷³ A Leake, Secretary, Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses to Miss Harold-Barry Hon. Secretary Doneraile D.N. Association, 22 May 1907 (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers MS 34, 166 (7)).

was president of the Doneraile Branch of the Jubilee Nurses and as documented in the end of year report, the group had succeeded in raising sufficient funds from local dignitaries to maintain a nurse in the surrounding area to provide for the costs.⁷⁴ This point though is important, for without the elite women such works would not be maintained or organised to the same degree. Using networks of friends and contacts, women wrote prolifically to encourage social equals to engage in their fund raising efforts.

The influence of an elite benefactress was often vitally important to get a project off the ground. In 1891 Florence Wynne set about establishing a national hospital for sufferers of consumption.⁷⁵ While the mission was only in its embryonic stage, Miss Wynne contacted Lady Hermione Fitzgerald, duchess of Leinster, to explain her work and request her support. The duchess replied at once consenting and promising a subscription.⁷⁶ By 1892 a building fund for the hospital was well underway with a host of dignitaries around the country acting as patrons for their own areas, aiming to secure the £10,000 necessary for the work. Florence, secretary to the committee, collected almost £4,000 and the total amount raised, over £10,000, was secured by August 1892.⁷⁷ Miss Wynne, wrote to the *Irish Times* after the death of the duchess of Leinster:

Without in any way wishing to depreciate or undervalue the kind interest and co-operation of any who subsequently joined this work later on, it is undoubtedly true that more honour is due to one who joined the work in order to make it a success than to anyone who joined it when it was a success, and the consumptive poor of Ireland will ever owe a debt of gratitude to her Grace the Duchess of Leinster for her generous and spontaneous support of an effort which she believed to be for the benefits of a large number of the suffering community in Ireland – the land of her adoption.⁷⁸

Consumption was a great leveller and indiscriminately plucked victims from all strata of society; Lady Leinster herself succumbed to the disease in 1895. The committee of the

⁷⁴ Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, Doneraile Branch for year ending 31 Aug 1909, (N.L.I., Doneraile Papers, MS 34,166(7)).

⁷⁵ *Dublin Daily Express*, 13 Aug. 1892.

⁷⁶ *Irish Times*, 28 Mar. 1895.

⁷⁷ *Dublin Daily Express*, 13 Aug. 1892; see also, *Dublin Daily Express*, 18 Feb. 1892.

⁷⁸ *Irish Times*, 28 Mar. 1895.

fledgling Royal National Hospital for Consumption in Ireland became embroiled in a dispute over the choice of site for the institution. Lilian Dundas, Lady Zetland, wife of the lord lieutenant (1889-92), Lawrence 1st marquess of Zetland, favoured a site in Newcastle, Co. Wicklow and threatened to withdraw her support and influence if it was not approved by the committee, which favoured another site near Shankill, Co. Dublin. The Newcastle site had been ‘generously offered’ by the Earl Fitzwilliam along with a donation of £500 towards the building fund.⁷⁹ Lady Zetland won the day, and Florence Wynne resigned in protest. The hospital went ahead and was opened by Lady Zetland in 1896.⁸⁰ Miss Wynne received an ‘ordinary invitation card’ to attend the opening, which she declined in a public letter to the *Irish Times* in March 1896. Her hopes that the hospital would be opened by a joint religious ceremony celebrated by the Church of Ireland and the Catholic Church was not to be fulfilled and this appears partly the reason for the rift with the executive committee.⁸¹ In June 1892, the committee along with Florence had agreed ‘suitable provision for the religious wants of the several denominations who may be inmates’ of the hospital.⁸² On 20 March 1896, the hospital finally opened on the nineteen-acre site at Newcastle. At the inaugural speech made by Mr. R.O.B. Furlong of the Inland Revenue, he paid tribute to Miss Wynne whose concept the hospital had been, and for her zealous work ‘to promote its success.’⁸³ Florence Wynne stated that she bore:

...no resentment to any of the members of the Executive Committee for the personal indignity offered to her on October 5, 1892, nor for the total ignorance of her wishes with regard to the religious question and the site, but that is a source of profound and lasting sorrow to her that the National Hospital for Consumption for Ireland has not been accomplished in the same spirit as it was founded.⁸⁴

She also expressed her gratitude to the earl of Carysfort who in 1892 had offered a beautiful site for the hospital in Shankill which was vetoed by Lady Zetland. Moreover, she praised those who assisted her during the initial years of planning the project particularly the prominent benefactors who had received no notice of their efforts,

⁷⁹ *Dublin Daily Express*, 18 Mar. 1892; see also, *Dublin Daily Express*, 18 Feb. 1892.

⁸⁰ Administrative History, Royal National Hospital for Consumption for Ireland, available from https://www.rcpi.ie/content/docs/000001/117_5_media.pdf [30 March, 2015].

⁸¹ *Dublin Daily Express*, 19 Oct. 1892.

⁸² *Freeman's Journal*, 20 Jun. 1892.

⁸³ *Belfast News Letter*, 21 Mar. 1896.

⁸⁴ *Irish Times*, 23 Mar. 1896.

including the deceased duchess of Leinster.⁸⁵ It is clear that while the patronage and influence of an elite benefactress was essential to get this project off the ground, the original concept was ultimately taken over by Lady Zetland. While Florence Wynne had no further role in the project, Lady Zetland through her influence made sure that the hospital did open, her threat to withdraw support and influence swaying committee members to back her.⁸⁶

Mary, countess of Meath

The countess of Meath was born Mary Jane Maitland, the only surviving child of Thomas Maitland and Amelia Young. Her father had been born in Cork and was a naval officer by profession who succeeded to the title of 11th earl of Lauderdale upon the death of his cousin, taking ownership of the family seat, Thirlestane Castle in Berwickshire in 1863.⁸⁷ Lady Mary married Reginald Lord Brabazon, later the 12th earl of Meath, in 1868 and while the couple primarily resided in England until the death of Lord Brabazon's father, they frequently spent time in Ireland.⁸⁸ After Reginald's resignation from diplomatic service in 1877, the Brabazons increasingly devoted much of their time to charitable and benevolent pursuits on both sides of the Irish Sea.⁸⁹

Lady Brabazon was greatly influenced by the work of Lady Ailsa, wife of the marquis of Ailsa who had shown Lady Brabazon her charitable activities on her estate and the nearby village. These included the building of improved cottages and a reading room for local fishermen. Lady Ailsa also chaired mothers' meetings where she promoted Christian values in the women of the region urging them to be good mothers, and good wives.⁹⁰ Lady Brabazon's focus on women and children is greatly evident in her charitable endeavours, especially her role in the Ministering Children's League which she established in 1884.⁹¹ The objective of the society was to 'cultivate the spirit of kindness in the hearts of children, and to create in their minds an earnest desire to help the poor and

⁸⁵ *Irish Times*, 23 Mar. 1896.

⁸⁶ Royal National Hospital for Consumption for Ireland, available at Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, www.rcpi.ie [20 May, 2016].

⁸⁷ *Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier*, 27 Mar. 1863; see also, JK Laughton & Roger Morriss, 'Thomas Maitland,' Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, available at <http://www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/17837?docPos=6> [20 April, 2015].

⁸⁸ *Morning Advertiser*, 9 Jan. 1868.

⁸⁹ John Springhall, 'Reginald Brabazon', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography available at www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/32019/47582. [20 April, 2015].

⁹⁰ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 40.

⁹¹ *The Tablet*, 11 Dec. 1886.

suffering.⁹² In a letter to a newspaper in 1887 she admonished parents, teachers and servants who had ‘unconsciously’ catered to the whims of their children, resulting in ‘spoilt’, ‘blasé’ individuals who had to be amused by others and had no ‘regard for the welfare of others.’⁹³ The Brabazon Employment Society founded in 1883 ran branches both in Ireland and England. It provided occupations for those in workhouses, infirmaries and other institutions with the core funding provided by Lady Brabazon. Inmates were taught skills to produce saleable goods (needlework, children’s clothes, baskets, toys, and iron-work) by a host of volunteers.⁹⁴ As each branch was self-supporting, the proceeds were used to replenish materials for further production. With a motto of ‘Love and Serve’ the Society had ten branches in Ireland, three in Dublin alone.⁹⁵ The Brabazon House for Aged Ladies, a home for elderly and distressed Protestant ladies was located in Sandymount, Dublin. It opened in 1902 and was funded by donations by Lady Meath.⁹⁶

Further ventures included the provision of artisan cottages in the Liberties area of Dublin city, and the provision of two city playgrounds for children, complete with green spaces and facilities for games.⁹⁷ According to Reginald Brabazon, the artisan houses were built on ground in the Coombe in Dublin which had previously been part of the Meath estate and hence belonged to his father. Unable to develop the site, the earl of Meath, Reginald’s father, urged the city corporation to condemn the standing property thus enabling the erection of cottages under the Dublin Artisan’s Dwellings Company. The aim was to provide cheap and appropriate housing for the working classes; the foundation stone was laid in 1880. Despite public apathy Lady Meath persevered and wrote to her father-in-law seeking permission to create a garden in the area opposite the cottages.⁹⁸ In 1883 when she and her husband were back in Dublin they viewed the newly erected cottages. She described the area as wonderfully changed in comparison to its ‘untidy and desolate-looking’ state of two years earlier.⁹⁹ Prizes were presented to the winner of the best kept residence, which she noted was fortunately an Irishwoman. Previous winners had been Scotch or English, which resulted in jealousy.¹⁰⁰ Lady Meath obviously found great

⁹² *The Tablet*, 11 Dec. 1886.

⁹³ *Exeter and Plymouth Gazette*, 1 Dec. 1887.

⁹⁴ *Weekly Irish Times*, 27 Sept. 1902.

⁹⁵ *Irish Times*, 23 May 1906.

⁹⁶ *Weekly Irish Times*, 27 Sept. 1902.

⁹⁷ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 10.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

⁹⁹ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 66.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

satisfaction with the results in the Coombe area: ‘if vacant spaces are found and covered with good buildings, or left as breathing spots, my dream will be fulfilling itself.’¹⁰¹ Even when Reginald’s father died in May of 1887, she saw the opportunity in having control over the estate to further her good works. Reginald spent time surveying properties in Dublin city and going over leases in the estate office, leading his wife to ponder the likelihood: ‘...of a good deal of spare space being available for improvements which are sorely needed, and please God that property will be improved in our time.’¹⁰²

Lady Meath’s engagement with charity was focused particularly on girls and women, and many projects were simultaneously run in England and Ireland. While the bulk of her good works were English-based this does not detract from the impact and work which she produced in Ireland, primarily in Dublin city but also on the Meath’s estates, where she oversaw the building and repair of cottages and farmhouses.¹⁰³ Financial matters which may have constrained many were not an issue when it came to her philanthropic endeavours.¹⁰⁴ It must be noted that until 1870 married women could not legally own property; the principle of coverture prevailed which saw a woman’s legal rights subsumed by those of her husband.¹⁰⁵ In practise, however, through the use of complex legal trusts many married noble women received ‘a separate income for her own use...independent of her husband.’¹⁰⁶ The countess of Meath was able to do much good through the legacy left as sole heir to her father, Lord Lauderdale, who at the time of his death in 1878 was worth approximately £470,640.¹⁰⁷ Near the eighth anniversary of his death Mary had a period of reflection, assessing the enormity of the charitable commitment she had made and the large sums of money involved. She placated herself by justifying her spending stating that she had: ‘not wasted much on self-gratification – have been stingy to a fault, but I would rather be that than waste money in a way Papa would not have liked’.¹⁰⁸

¹⁰¹ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 66.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

¹⁰³ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁴ *South Wales Echo*, 19 Mar. 1897.

¹⁰⁵ Wilson, *Women, marriage and property in wealthy landed families in Ireland, 1750-1850*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 65.

¹⁰⁷ JK Laughton, ‘Thomas Maitland’ available at Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, <http://www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/17837?docPos=6> [20 Apr, 2015]. See also, *The Star*, 11 Feb. 1879.

¹⁰⁸ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 89.

Embracing the Victorian values of her class Lady Meath demonstrated, through her actions and words, the importance of self-help, thrift, cleanliness, honesty, and personal responsibility. Allegiance to these core values were not alone personally important to her but were worthy of cultivation in others. In 1905 she wrote a letter to the *Daily Mail* admonishing the unnecessary expense of ladies fashion: ‘some women were foolish enough to spend eight, ten or even twelve guineas upon an up-to-date hat... I also feel very strongly about the quantity of costly jewellery that is now commonly worn out of doors, in the street, and in broad daylight.’¹⁰⁹ She went on to argue that such temptation: ‘paves the way for some people to become jail-birds.’¹¹⁰ This comment in itself gives an interesting insight into the character of Lady Meath which hints at the formative influence which religion played on her life and charitable occupations. Whether religious denomination was significant in the shaping of a charitable mind is unclear, it is evident that religion shaped the lives of individuals, in many ways ‘determining their behaviour, their interaction with others and their views of the world around them.’¹¹¹ However, the diaries of the countess of Meath provide an insight into her religious conviction which can be considered as a corner-stone to her charitable works.¹¹² In her unassuming way, she remained active up to the time of her death in 1918. Despite the fact that she credits her husband with organising much of the good works, he maintained that ‘she would hide her own leading personality, and allow the world to think that movements which were the products of her own brain, and of her enthusiastic love for God and for her fellow-creatures, were due to the initiative of others’.¹¹³

Lady Meath’s dedication remained steadfast during her life. While she focused primarily on Protestant charities, she also contributed to Catholic ones. In 1897 Lady Meath offered £2000 to establish two homes, one Protestant and the other Catholic, in which to train workhouse girls for domestic service. However, the hierarchy of the Catholic Church did not approve the project and it fell through.¹¹⁴ The *Daily Express* in December of that year applauded Lady Meath’s endeavours to: ‘raise the status of the girls in the workhouse, who have so small a prospect’ which would see them ‘rescued from becoming hereditary

¹⁰⁹ *Irish Independent*, 1 Aug. 1908.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹¹¹ Hill, *Women in Ireland a century of change*, p. 5; see also, Luddy, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth-century Ireland*, pp 1-8.

¹¹² See, Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*.

¹¹³ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 9.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

paupers.¹¹⁵ Her husband commented that the refusal to carry through the project showed ‘short-sightedness of the real interest of the country!’¹¹⁶ The plight of workhouse inmates had been on her agenda for several years and in 1894 she had written a letter to *St. James’s Gazette* seeking ‘fit persons’ to assist as workhouse attendants which were understaffed at the time.¹¹⁷ The following year Lady Meath undertook a new venture after visiting some of the tenement houses in the city, deplored as places: ‘where disease of mind and body are rampant.’¹¹⁸ She wrote to the *Dublin Daily Express* stating that ‘it is terrible to think that innocent children are brought up in such sad surroundings, and are unconsciously trained to become thieves, drunkards, and bad characters.’¹¹⁹ She highlighted the scheme initiated by the Dublin Artisan’s Dwelling Company as one to be emulated by others. In order to attract investors, she emphasised that the earlier scheme had been a success, having been run as a profit making organisation, paying annual dividends to its shareholders.¹²⁰

It is proposed early next year...to erect tenement houses on the Meath estate. The rents are to be collected by a lady, as Miss Octavia Hill’s system is not only conducive to regular payments being made, but also to the well-being of the tenants, who find in the collector one who takes an interest in them and helps them in the best way i.e., by teaching them to help themselves.¹²¹

Octavia Hill was an English social reformer with a particular regard for education and housing. She established a ‘method’ for tenants, where families were provided with clean, ventilated, and maintained rooms. Central to the system was that she herself made weekly visits to inspect the properties and collect rent. A passionate advocate of small-scale solutions to housing problems, she assisted tenants in finding employment, provided a playground for children and in effect acted as a social worker providing support and assistance wherever possible.¹²² Her ‘method’ was widely known as a result of published articles that had attracted much interest at home and abroad. Unlike many charitable

¹¹⁵ *Daily Express*, 14 Dec. 1897 cited in Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 267.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *St. James’s Gazette*, 25 Apr. 1894.

¹¹⁸ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 279.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 280-1.

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

¹²² Gillian Darley, ‘Octavia Hill (1838-1912)’, *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, available at <http://www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/33873?docPos=1> [20 April, 2015].

efforts, the religious denomination of those being helped was irrelevant to Miss Hill.¹²³ That Lady Meath was influenced by Octavia Hill is indisputable, but unlike Hill's schemes, those of Lady Meath did not prove fruitful. Despite investing a considerable amount of time and finances transforming two old houses into model tenements she complained that: 'the lack of supervision and compulsion on the part of the Corporation, and the ingrained dirty habits and destructive tendencies of large numbers of the class of people accustomed to live in tenement houses, rendered the experiment un-remunerative, and it had to be abandoned.'¹²⁴

The volume of charitable activities in which Lady Meath was engaged was considerable, particularly for a lady of her status during this time period. She made frequent trips between England and Ireland to keep an eye on schemes she had going in both countries, all the while engaged in her role as mistress of her home in Kilruddery and undertaking her extended function there with the estate tenants. Furthermore, during the period 1869-86 she and Reginald had six children, four sons and two daughters, and she involved herself in their rearing and education, though there is little detail about this in her diaries. Alongside her charity work, she made several trips to the United States, Canada, New Zealand, South Africa, Egypt, Japan, China and Europe to further her interests of her Ministering Children's League which was close to her heart. Moreover, she was a prolific writer on social and philanthropic work and even collaborated with her husband on the production of *Social aims and thoughts on imperial and social subjects*.¹²⁵ The couple also held gatherings of like-minded people who had philanthropic minds 'and the welfare of humanity at heart.'¹²⁶ One such meeting at Kilruddery in 1899 aimed to bring together neighbours around Dublin 'upon whom falls the grave responsibility of administering justice, the laws, and local government, with a selection of those who have made a study of sociology or are actively engaged in philanthropic work amongst the masses.'¹²⁷ On the agenda were the poor laws, industrial schools, prisons, housing in Dublin, all areas in which the countess was already heavily involved. The purpose was to discuss how best to promote reform and improve conditions of the poor. Although unsuccessful in the

¹²³ Gillian Darley, 'Octavia Hill (1838-1912)', Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, available at <http://www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/33873?docPos=1> [20 April, 2015].

¹²⁴ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 281.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹²⁶ *Dublin Daily Express*, 27 Sept. 1899.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*

tenement scheme, Lady Meath continued with other plans advocating the end of the ‘barbarous’ system where epileptics were locked up in lunatic asylums ‘possessed of their mental faculties, and yet compelled to consort with the insane’, which was successfully changed.¹²⁸ She also established workrooms in both London and Dublin which provided training to disabled soldiers in order that they could be self-sufficient and functional members of society. Once established these were handed over to other charitable groups to manage.¹²⁹

Lady Meath can be seen as a true philanthropist. Driven by a strong religious conviction and helped by a hefty inheritance she also had the luck to meet and marry a like-minded man. She was essentially a career philanthropist, actively using her money, influence (and that of her husband) to enable her many schemes to get approval. She was also someone who evolved over time, using her networks such as Lady Ailsa to gain insight into how certain practices worked before attempting to put her own into practice. Her sympathies with Octavia Hill’s work imply a keener sense of the underlying social problems that were conspiring against the poor at the time and show Lady Meath as a woman with a social conscience. Hence her training and workhouse schemes sought to provide individuals with the ability to be self-sufficient. She differed to her peers in relation to her undertakings with the urban poor. She took an active interest in visiting Meath property in the city of Dublin; one of her primary reasons for attempting to transform some of their old houses into model tenement homes was due to a visit she made to the urban poor in the 1890s: ‘Some of the backyards I visited yesterday were in a terrible state of filth, and even two reformed tenement houses, on which £1000 had been expended...were rapidly deteriorating.’¹³⁰ It must be also borne in mind that the properties she was inspecting were already under the care of philanthropic societies: others were actually part of the Meath estates. Lady Meath’s charitable and philanthropic endeavours offered her an outlet for her energies and abilities which few of her era managed to emulate.

Conclusion

While the landlord may have set down rules and conventions for those associated with the family estate, wives and daughters of the country house played a significant role in private

¹²⁸ Brabazon, (ed.), *The diaries of Mary countess of Meath*, p. 283.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 280.

charitable and philanthropic endeavours. The lady of the big house engaged in dispensing food, clothes, and gifts to the elderly and needy on the estate. Many aristocratic women maintained harmony and stability on the estate by visiting and inspecting estate cottages, and developing many face-to-face relationships with their tenants. Support for schools, churches, and specific endeavours in times of distress were the norm, while patronising local bazaars, shows and community projects maintained the accepted social order in the community. While there is an ad-hoc element to the character of charity provided by estate owners, it remained to individual women to determine their own levels of response to circumstances. Though the limitations of finances, personal views and morals, all played a part in charitable responses, the central component of duty and its implied donor/receiver relationship was traditional. Reciprocity was the intended outcome with deference and loyalty expected from the receiver. The basic parameters of the role and duty of the chatelaine were long established as were the expectations of the employees and wider community.

Undoubtedly the period 1870 to 1923 saw a huge transformation in the activities of aristocratic women and their private/public works. While their contributions varied it is certain that the involvement of aristocratic women was of significant importance both in the private and public spheres. This chapter has shown that far from being passive participants in a patriarchal society many aristocratic women extended their remit beyond the demesne walls into a more public sphere where some undertook a more hands-on approach to charity.

Chapter 5: ‘The sword of Damocles’: death, grief and daily life during the Great War

The Great War had a significant impact on the lives of the women of the Irish aristocracy. While dealing with physical separation from loved-ones, women also contended with the emotional, financial and social aspects of war. Though Ireland did not have to bear enemy attacks to its towns and cities people undoubtedly had to make sacrifices. Whether it was the scarcity or escalating price of food and supplies, interruptions to communications and the social way of life, the separation from family and friends or the death of loved ones many invariably felt the impact of the war. The aristocracy were somewhat cushioned from the impact of some of these difficulties, in part due to their social standing, but as the war dragged on the strain became apparent. While the disruptions to daily life were considered tiresome or an inconvenience, these were overshadowed by the deaths of loved ones. The threat of injury and/or death became a very tangible experience in which women lived in fear and anxiety waiting to hear news of sons, husbands, brothers and fathers. Letters reveal the increased awareness of destruction and suffering and a gradual awareness of modern warfare in all its horror. Consequently, women were faced with death on an unprecedented level, relied heavily on their sense of duty as members of the aristocracy and supported one another with the knowledge that bereavement was now a commonplace experience.

‘Everybody is mad about the war’: perceptions and facts

According to Daisy, countess of Fingall ‘the Season of 1914 was the gayest and most magnificent that London has ever seen. To me there was something terrible about it. I felt it at the time. The wild extravagance, the entertaining, the money spending.’¹ Perhaps the unbridled self-indulgence was a reaction to the disbelief that war would actually erupt. When it did, there was the expectation that the war would only be a short one. This led to a general excitement which seemed to ‘have got into the very air we breathe.’² The public was warned that the war ‘would make a serious demand on everything they held dear...the price must be paid, the battle must be fought, and the victory must be with us.’³ Despite such warnings public excitement was widespread, displaying perhaps a lack of understanding of the dangers, destruction and heartache it would cause. This is best

¹ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 352.

² *Derry Journal*, 14 Aug. 1914; see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, p. 72.

³ *Dublin Daily Express*, 15 Oct. 1914.

illustrated by a letter of Lady Georgina Preston to her son Jenico enquiring about his commission. She wrote: ‘here everybody is mad about the war and all want to get to the Front – it will be a splendid thing for those who come back safe – just think if you got a medal for bravery at your age.’⁴ As the war progressed speculation regarding the war’s end continued. In 1915 for example Ethel Dillon wrote to her mother Lady Augusta that “I have heard several people here say that ‘their friends who ought to know’” say the war will be over by June or July at latest.⁵ Writing in 1915 Lady Georgina Preston noted that ‘everyone has a different theory of when the war is going to be over and I don’t think anyone can be certain. Perhaps next month will tell. Some say it will be practically over in July, but I think it won’t last through another winter. The loss of life will make it impossible.’⁶

The initial period of the war led to a flurry of letter writing amongst the Preston family particularly between Jenico, Viscount Gormanston, and his wife Eileen and mother Georgina. While initially Jenico toyed with the idea of opting for foreign service which would have seen him go to the front, having been examined by a doctor regarding his hearing it was decided that Home Service was preferable for the otherwise able-bodied man. In fact, Jenico was deemed ‘exceedingly deaf’ and active service would jeopardise whatever hearing he retained.⁷ His mother Georgina advised him that even if home service wasn’t appealing ‘it will only be a few months and one can bear anything for that time.’⁸ Some family members including his sister Ismay, felt it was his duty to serve abroad.⁹ Eileen, his wife, was evidently distressed by the input from others and stated that ‘my opinion (and I think it should count more than anybody’s) is that you’d be better with the depot battalion. You have joined only for the period of the war, and are not going to make soldiering your profession therefore; why Mosh [Ismay Preston] should advise you to go abroad I don’t know. What is her point?’¹⁰

⁴ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 1914 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

⁵ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 12 Mar. 1915 Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10).

⁶ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 23 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

⁷ Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 29 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/3).

⁸ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 23 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

⁹ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 29 Apr. & 30 Apr. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6 & MS 44,427/7).

¹⁰ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 20 Apr. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

The reliance of Jenico on his wife's opinion is evident. She left the decision to her husband though secretly hoping he would not opt for foreign service. For his part Jenico was disappointed that Eileen would not nail her flag to the mast: 'I am sorry darling, that you would not give me a definite decision...I expected my precious who is most concerned to give me a decided opinion. However, I think the doctor's verdict settles it.'¹¹ Eileen was relieved with the decision particularly as it had been taken out of their hands. She wrote: 'I didn't want to persuade you against your will.'¹² Indeed part of the reason Jenico appears to have been indecisive in the first place was his dislike of the officers in the 'Home Battalion'. He also admitted being intimidated by his brigadier particularly when he bellowed: 'it puts me off and I get confused and hesitate in my answers, though really knowing what information to give him. I never can make out why guards think it right to treat subalterns as if they were dirt and hardly human beings.'¹³ Eileen advised him not to 'worry about the old brigadier, and try not to be frightened by their bawlings...my father used to damn them all right and left. This is the acknowledged custom, apparently; and any General who didn't do it would be considered not to know his work.'¹⁴ Her father was General Sir William Butler who had had a successful military career from 1868 serving in West and South Africa, retiring in 1905, while her two brothers served during the war.¹⁵ Similarly, Lady Georgina Preston wrote constantly to her son offering advice and support and providing encouragement during particularly difficult periods. In 1916 she wrote: 'don't be downhearted darling. We all must have a lot to bear now for the war and just offer it to God as your share and you will feel better...think how delightful it will be when it is over and we are all at peace again, but it is a hard fight.'¹⁶

In 1915 Jenico was made 2nd lieutenant of the Railway Transport Officer (RTO) in Dublin and the following year he was promoted to temporary lieutenant which was graded as a staff captain for pay purposes.¹⁷ Eileen was delighted and wrote to her husband: '1,000 congrats! With what pride and pleasure shall not I be able now to address you as

¹¹ Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 29 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/3).

¹² Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 30 Apr. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/7).

¹³ Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 20 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/3).

¹⁴ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 21 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

¹⁵ James Quinn, 'William Francis Butler', *Dictionary of Irish Biography*, <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1305> [14 Mar.2016].

¹⁶ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 21 Sept. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2);

Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 16 Aug. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

¹⁷ *Scotsman*, 31 Jul. 1915; *Birmingham Daily Post*, 4 May 1916.

such.’¹⁸ Eileen had felt that Jenico had an ‘unconquerable habit of pulling back and leaving others to do your work and take your place.’¹⁹ She wrote to him: ‘I do wish you would be a little more self-assertive; it is the only way to get on.’²⁰ However her pride is evident when she delighted in the prospect of seeing him in his uniform. When he planned a visit to see his children she commented: ‘how nice you will look in blue tabs! Will they be royal blue?’²¹ Having spent over a year in Dublin, Jenico accepted a posting in Tipperary in 1917 which he felt was an attractive position not alone for the government car and petrol which would be made available to him but also because he would be his own master.²² His work involved ‘equipping and clothing and paying men of the Labour battalions and I should have anything from 250 to 400 more to look after and a permanent staff of fifty men.’²³ Even though Eileen did not have the constant anxiety regarding her husband’s safety, the separation was difficult particularly at family occasions. There was great disappointment in December 1916 when orders were received that no leave would be given to officers on account of a rail strike, but Jenico was more optimistic: ‘I still live in hopes that I may get down for Christmas. This strike may be settled then and I shall work it for all I am worth.’²⁴ Eileen looked forward to their meetings and particularly when she took herself off to Dublin for an anticipated rendezvous with her husband. For Jenico, his war was relatively tame, though he was in Dublin during the Easter Rising in 1916 and wrote to Eileen of events:

There had been for several days a sort of siege by surprise here, particularly at nights and bullets were whizzing down the platform and making a din on milk cases etc. Liberty Hall is a wreck inside, though the walls are standing, but Sackville St on both sides from the Pillar to the bridge is in ruins; the Metropole Hotel, Eason’s, the G.P.O. and all the shops are smashed. The casualties on both sides have been heavy, and particularly among our officers. but in the main there is now

¹⁸ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 8 Sept. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/7).

¹⁹ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 26 Apr. 1916, (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 10 Aug. 1916, (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

²² Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 12 Jun. 1917, (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/4).

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ Jenico Preston to Eileen Preston, 16 Dec. 1916, (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/4); see also, Catriona Pennell, *A kingdom united* (Oxford, 2012), p. 211.

nothing worse than looting; we have 50 or 60 looters here now and about 700 prisoners have been sent to England.²⁵

His brother, Hubert, also serving in Dublin that week exclaimed that the city was ‘like Ypres!’²⁶ Two days later, Jenico was happy to report that Dublin was all quiet, ‘except for an occasional shot from a sniper or two in the evening on the south side of the river.’²⁷

Elsewhere dangers presented by the war generated a mixed sense of exhilaration and shock amongst many women.²⁸ From England Ina Spencer wrote to Augusta Dillon, baroness Clonbrock about her experience of air raids: ‘the noise is awful, when it goes on for 3 hours and makes one realise what our brave men have to go through and suppose in time we shall get accustomed to it – for after all the shrapnel from one’s own guns is equally dangerous.’²⁹ A friend had informed Ina that he had gone for a walk to Victoria Station on the night it was hit and claimed that ‘it was a wonderful sight.’ However, a neighbour who returned home from a shelter after a bombing in the city of London found a soldier ‘on her door-step with a leg blown off and a girl with him seriously injured.’³⁰ Augusta’s niece, May Dillon, noted of the raids: ‘it is nonsense to say only 69 people were killed when they say a mile square is in ruins. A special constable says there must have been quite 1,000 killed.’³¹ Speculations and ‘reliable’ reports were frequently exchanged in personal letters though seldom was there any degree of accuracy. Witnessing raids was a frightening experience, though Ethel O’Brien, baroness Inchiquin was keen to down-play the danger she and her son had been in during a raid in 1918. While huddled in the sitting-room of her London home, she wrote to her husband Lucius and recalled: ‘we heard a shell fall. Sonnie [her son] thinks it was a dead shell. I can hardly hear the guns now. I trust they are going away now and that we can go to bed.’³² Florence Corkran writing to Augusta Dillon, baroness Clonbrock in 1916 relayed how five bombs were dropped in Belgravia one morning, and noted that ‘the whole of London

²⁵ Jenico Preston to Eileen, 2 May 1916, (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/1); see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, pp 173-9; Fingall, *Seventy years young*, pp 370-7, regarding experiences of the Easter Rising.

²⁶ Jenico Preston to Eileen, 2 May 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/1).

²⁷ Jenico Preston to Eileen, 4 May 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/1).

²⁸ See, Pennell, *A kingdom united*, pp 38-43.

²⁹ Ina Spencer to Augusta Clonbrock, 14 Oct. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792(6)).

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ Hilda May Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, 35,792 (9)).

³² Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 1918 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/10).

is wildly excited but no panic – ‘isn’t it amusing?’ is what most people say!!!...the girls are thrilled as they always longed to be ‘in a raid!’³³

Yet the threat of danger became increasingly commonplace and dealing with the mounting anxiety was something to which women had to quickly adapt. Lady Augusta Gregory was aware of the danger faced by her son, Robert, a major in the Royal Flying Corps. She wrote: ‘one’s heart stand[s] still: one has just to keep working and say one’s prayers.’³⁴ Robert’s death in Italy in January 1918 caused W.B. Yeats to write several poems in his honour including ‘An Irish airman foresees his death.’³⁵ When men were injured many women travelled to attend to them while they recuperated. Fortunately for Georgina Preston, viscountess Gormanston she was in London when her two sons were wounded at different times during the war. This enabled her to visit on a daily basis and assuage her fears as to their well-being. Similarly, Daisy Plunkett, countess of Fingall happened to be in London when word came through that her husband had been wounded, and she was able to stay with friends until she heard further news of his condition. In case he would be sent to a northern hospital which would make visiting difficult, she ‘boldly’ went to the War Office to see an officer who had control over these matters.³⁶ When her husband woke up on the hospital ship coming from France he found a card pinned to his chest with the name of a London hospital. As a result, Lady Fingall remained in London for quite a time and paid frequent visits to her husband.³⁷ Leonie Leslie made a point of visiting her niece Clare’s husband, Wilfred Sheridan, who had been injured and hospitalised in London and was quite depressed as a result. Clare wrote thanking Leonie stating that Wilfred had a month’s leave and that ‘it’s just heaven having him home now – and to see him in his old garden clothes instead of uniform, and we are out of earshot of any bugles or drums – and one forgets there is a war on, a sword of Damocles over one’s head.’³⁸ Unfortunately Captain Sheridan was killed in action just five days after the birth of his third child and only son in September 1915. Lady Inchiquin was happy to report in 1915 that her cousin, Johnnie, was ‘very lively and rushes about just like a boy’

³³ Florence Corkran to Augusta Clonbrock, 28 Nov. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(11)).

³⁴ Augusta Gregory to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792(9)); see also, John H. Morrow Jr., ‘The war in the air’ in Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford illustrated history of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), pp 265-78.

³⁵ W.B. Yeats, ‘An Irish airman foresees his death’ in *The wild swans at Coole, and other poems*, (New York, 1919); see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p. 185.

³⁶ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 365.

³⁷ *Ibid.*

³⁸ Clare Frewen Sheridan to Leonie Leslie, 23 Mar. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44).

having recovered from injuries. When he had to return to the front she remarked: 'it is dreadful to think he may be killed any day.'³⁹ According to Catriona Pennell, the feelings about the war were complex and changed over time, from initial excitement to the escalating reality of 'lists of casualties, the missing and the wounded.'⁴⁰

'Cheerfully sacrificed on the altar of patriotism': death and bereavement

In October 1914 the *Irish Times* noted that 'before the war is over many old and respected families will have come to an end, so far as their male line is concerned. An even deeper sympathy than usual will be felt with the relatives of those who have cheerfully sacrificed on the altar of patriotism not only their individual lives, but their hopes of carrying on the race.'⁴¹ The aristocracy had an enlistment ratio of 59 per cent and because it was such a small knit community this ultimately meant that nearly every family had relatives or friends who served during the Great War.⁴²

In November 1914, Major Hugh Dawnay, husband of Lady Susan Beresford, daughter of the marquess of Waterford, was one of the first to embark for action in Belgium. Having just captured ground he threw himself into a trench, 'laughing and saying, 'What a life!' when he was hit by a single shot.'⁴³ His comrades were unable to retrieve his body due to heavy bombardment. When they looked for it the following morning it was gone, the assumption being the Germans had cleared it. Susan 'hoped on till the end of the war that he might only have been wounded and was in some hospital, but no trace of him was ever found until some years later when they discovered his remains buried deep by some shell below the place where he had died.'⁴⁴ Susan's inability to accept the death of her husband was not a unique experience by any means. The same month that Major Dawnay lost his life, Robert Stuart of the Royal Scots Fusiliers, son of the 6th Earl Castle Stewart, of Stuart Hall, Stewartstown, Co. Tyrone, was wounded while leading a charge at Neuve Chapelle,

³⁹ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 25 Aug. 1915 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/9).

⁴⁰ Pennell, *A kingdom united*, p. 138.

⁴¹ *Irish Times*, 1 Oct. 1914.

⁴² Peter Martin, 'Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War, 1914-19' in Adrian Gregory & Senia Paseta, (eds.) *Ireland and the Great War, a war to unite us all?* (Manchester, 2002), p. 40; see also, Dooley, *The decline of the big house in Ireland*, p. 124; House of Lords War Memorial, available at www.parliament.uk [15 May 2016].

⁴³ Anson, *Victorian days*, pp 232-3; Hon. Hugh Dawnay, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [19 Nov. 2015].

⁴⁴ Anson, *Victorian days*, pp 232-3.

France.⁴⁵ He requested that the ambulance crew who came to his aid, take care of four fellow soldiers who had been injured alongside him.⁴⁶ When they returned, he was missing.⁴⁷ One newspaper reported that ‘the one gleam of hope was that there were no definite tidings that he was mortally wounded in the field, and that neither his identification disc nor any part of his equipment had been found.’⁴⁸ Constance Stuart, Roberts wife, found a solace of sorts by throwing herself into war work, nursing the wounded first in London and later at No. 14 General Hospital, France. She confronted ‘the work of the day’ while after some time harboured hope of her husband’s safe return. Constance remained in France until the end of the war.⁴⁹ The Castle Stewarts lost their eldest son, Andrew, Viscount Stuart, the following year in 1915 but by that stage were convinced of Robert’s death. When Gertrude McMicking, daughter of George de Stacpoole, received news of her husband’s disappearance, her wait for news proved almost unbearable. After two months of ‘agonizing suspense, she received his first postcard, written weeks previously.’⁵⁰ Col. Harry McMicking had been taken prisoner by the Germans in 1914 and ultimately remained in a POW camp for over three and a half years. The duc de Stacpoole recognised the agony for those at home and the worry and strain heaped on them fretting over their loved ones. He wrote: ‘thinking of relatives, friends, and acquaintances, one scarcely dared to open a paper or read the list of killed and missing.’⁵¹ His own experience was intensified by the fact that all five of his sons served in the war, with the two youngest making the ‘supreme sacrifice’ while only in their early twenties, and the older three all sustaining injuries.⁵²

Lady Georgiana Preston’s fears for her serving sons were not without substance. In October of 1915 the Preston family were shocked to hear of the death of Ninian Crichton-Stuart, husband to Ismay Preston.⁵³ Son of the earl of Bute, Ninian had married Ismay in 1906 and had four children, the eldest of whom, a son, had died at the age of two. Having

⁴⁵ The Hon. Robert Sheffield Stuart, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [20 Nov. 2015].

⁴⁶ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 11 Jan. 1917.

⁴⁷ See Martin, ‘Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War, 1914-1919’, pp 28-48.

⁴⁸ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 11 Jan. 1917.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

⁵⁰ de Stacpoole, *Irish and other memories*, p. 193.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp 97-8.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁵³ Lord Ninian Edward Crichton-Stuart, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [19 Nov. 2015].

joined the Welsh Regiment in 1914, his wife felt he would ‘would not pass the medical but it appears they are taking anybody who has had training in the Regulars, they are so short of Officers that they take anybody.’⁵⁴ He was killed leading an attack to retake a trench and according to Lady Georgina ‘had been to Communion for two days running before he went into action, so for him all was right.’⁵⁵ In fact a French priest reported that he had found Ninian praying in his church early one morning, and having made his confession, Ninian served at the Mass and received Holy Communion.⁵⁶ Lady Georgina travelled to Scotland to be with her daughter in her time of need, and reported that Ismay was ‘desolate’ and had collapsed.⁵⁷ Only six weeks before while home on leave, Ninian had looked splendid in his uniform.⁵⁸ Jenico Preston, viscount Gormanston who happened to be in London at the time attended a requiem for his brother-in-law though Georgina wished they would be able to bring ‘Ninian’s body home later to be buried here.’⁵⁹ A few weeks later she reported to her son that Ismay was receiving daily injections from her doctor and getting plenty of bed rest. She wrote: ‘perhaps she will get on now, but it will take time. Poor Mosh and poor widows all over the world in this dreadful time.’⁶⁰ Earlier in the year Ismay had at her own expense, ‘fitted up a large and commodious room for the reception and nursing of wounded,’ and it was perhaps this role which sustained her during the long months ahead.⁶¹ Jenico’s wife, Eileen, payed Ismay a visit the following year in 1916 and assisted her with the wounded soldiers in her care. She noted that a ‘Capt. Ramsay (Coldstream Guards) is the nicest and I think devoted to Mosh.’⁶² Indeed a relationship between Ismay and Captain Ramsay further developed with Eileen observing that the amorous captain had ‘two large photos of her on a table beside his bed!’⁶³ Despite Ismay being twelve years older than Archibald Ramsay, the couple married in 1917 and went on to have four children.⁶⁴

⁵⁴ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 5 Sept. 1914 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

⁵⁵ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 14 Oct. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2); see also, *Fife Free Press*, 9 Oct. 1915.

⁵⁶ *Fifeshire Advertiser*, 16 Oct. 1915.

⁵⁷ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 14 Oct. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

⁵⁸ Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 30 Aug. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/8); *Dundee Courier*, 26 Aug. 1915.

⁵⁹ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 14 Oct. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

⁶⁰ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 4 Nov. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

⁶¹ *Dundee Courier*, 5 Feb. 1915.

⁶² Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 24 Sept. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

⁶³ Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 1 Oct. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*; see also, *Liverpool Daily Post*, 16 Apr. 1917.

The Leslie family of County Monaghan were distraught when their second son, Norman, was killed in France on 19 October 1914.⁶⁵ A keen horseman and talented at music Norman was ‘a radiant joy bringer to his parents and all belonging to him.’⁶⁶ In a letter before his death he wrote: ‘some are given chances of proving themselves men, and to others no chance comes...it is far better to go out with honour than survive with shame.’⁶⁷ In November of 1914 Shane Leslie wrote to his heartbroken mother Leonie imploring to fill her days with letter-writing, reading, and working with refugees, rather than sitting in Norman’s room.⁶⁸ Indeed, her sister-in-law, Mary Crawshay, wrote in a similar vein: ‘I know the worst is just at this moment as I write, a grey afternoon, yourself racked with tire – and the place so lonely. Dear Shane says he hears Norman did some splendid life-saving things on Sept 26 under fire? We shall not be surprised at anything, for we know what great things he was capable of doing – I think of you with such love and pain...these first days are so awfully lonely for you needing him and missing him.’⁶⁹ Shane advised his mother to reflect instead on ‘the joyous contemplation of his present state’.⁷⁰ Keen to persuade his mother not to visit France Shane insisted that there was no point in going to ‘where the dead of one week are forgotten the next and the sympathizers of today are the stricken of tomorrow.’⁷¹ Better that she remain at Glaslough where Norman’s memory was strongest.⁷² In December of 1914 Shane, who was an ambulance driver and interpreter for the American Volunteer Motor-Ambulance Corps in France located the resting place of his brother, at Armentieres. The plot was ‘circled with paving stones and someone has planted a rosebush in the clay.’⁷³ He reinterred the body in a proper coffin, and cut a lock of Norman’s hair which he sent to Leonie. He wrote: ‘I cannot describe how calm and peaceful he was lying. There was no trace of suffering or contortion and he seemed as one who had reached his appointed end with credit and dignity.’⁷⁴ For Leonie, the tragedy of her son’s death remained with her all her life and Norman’s room at Castle Leslie remained untouched for over twenty years, where a ‘curious sad

⁶⁵ Norman Jerome Beauchamp Leslie, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [20 Nov. 2015]

⁶⁶ Mary Crawshay to Jenny Churchill, 1914 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44(9)); see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, pp 168-270.

⁶⁷ *Portsmouth Evening News*, 24 Nov. 1914; see also, *Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer*, 5 Nov. 1914.

⁶⁸ Otto Rauchbauer, *Shane Leslie, sublime failure* (Dublin, 2005), p. 247.

⁶⁹ Mary Crawshay to Leonie Leslie, 1914 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44(9)).

⁷⁰ Rauchbauer, *Shane Leslie, Sublime failure*, p. 247.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

⁷² *Ibid.*

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.51; see also, Kehoe, *Fortune’s daughters*, pp 297-8.

⁷⁴ Rauchbauer, *Shane Leslie, Sublime failure*, p. 247.

atmosphere lingered.⁷⁵ When she herself was buried the cross from Norman's grave was placed in her coffin. In 1915 she travelled to Malta where Norman began his military career, visiting some of his 'haunts...his barracks, the bay where he learnt sailing and used to swim, the polo ground...I can see his happy face at the race course when his pony won... I am so glad I came out.'⁷⁶

Elizabeth Browne, countess of Kenmare too lost her second son, Dermot Brown, at the age of twenty-one, in September 1915.⁷⁷ The pain of his death was overwhelming when she wrote: 'I think of his short life full of blessings, full of love and of joy, and that was all God wanted him to know. But Oh! ...what terrible pain – the crushing and breaking of our human hearts, ... it seems too much to bear.'⁷⁸ When her youngest son, Gerald, headed off to the Western Front in 1916 aged nineteen she wrote: 'I feel terribly frightened, that last hour of packing and forced cheerfulness is as bad as any scale. He had breakfast on a tray in my room, and then I saw his great tall back fade away – just in the same frame as the last picture in my mind of Der. I didn't know how to let him go, and now, I can't help it, I feel a trembling dread through every word I speak and at the back of every minute of the day. There are times when all the courage one tried so hard to store melts and one feels a very cowardly wretched creature.'⁷⁹ After making a visit to her son's grave in May of 1919 she wrote:

...all so beyond comprehension, the wide battlefields, so awful, so terrible; the strange hush over all that devastation, the grim ruins, the piteous little crosses standing here and there in utter loneliness; one's mind and soul seemed to break before anything so unbelievable, unable to hold anything so immense; it was almost unbearable and yet one came away with a serenity at heart, for the splendour of the sacrifice outweighed all else.⁸⁰

However, it was not just the loss of military personnel that impacted on the lives of families. When the Abercorns lost their eldest daughter, Alexandria Phyllis, on the

⁷⁵ Leslie, *The Gilt and the gingerbread*, p. 124; see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p. 270.

⁷⁶ Leonie Leslie to Constance Leslie, 6 May 1915 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44 (7)).

⁷⁷ *Edinburgh Evening News*, 4 Oct. 1915; The Hon. Maurice Henry Dermot Browne, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [20 Nov. 2015].

⁷⁸ Davenport-Hynes, *Ettie the intimate life and dauntless spirit of Lady Desborough*, p. 323.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 224.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 202.

sinking of the mail steamer, *Leinster*, in 1918, the whole family was shocked.⁸¹ Clodagh Beresford recalled calling to see her aunt Mary Hamilton, duchess of Abercorn on the morning of the disaster and hearing that Phyllis was due to arrive at Kingstown decided to wait to see her cousin.⁸² When Phyllis did not arrive Clodagh left promising to return the next day. It was only later that word of the disaster broke and Susan Beresford, Clodagh's sister, went to Kingstown to await news: 'It seems to have taken everyone a long time to realize what had happened even at Kingstown', she recalled.⁸³ Susan was faced with watching the rescue boats arrive at the port, initially bringing the walking wounded, later 'others with no marks on them at all...some had hardly any clothes on...then boats came back with a few dead bodies, and it slowly dawned on them that no more would return alive; more and more corpses came in.'⁸⁴ A makeshift morgue was set up at a picture gallery in Dublin and it was here that Susan spent three days in a 'gruesome nightmare' searching for the body of Phyllis.⁸⁵ The prospect of identifying a body was exacerbated by the fact that 'their clothes were just like sodden brown paper, their hair was hanging down in a tangled mass, and there was no way of knowing whether they were first-class passengers or the poorest emigrants.'⁸⁶ The family gradually accepted that Phyllis was lost, and while her body was never recovered they held a memorial service for her and the two servants who were also killed at St. Mark's church, North Audley Street, London.⁸⁷ The king and queen were represented while the duke of Connaught attended in person. Queen Alexandra on hearing about the tragedy sent condolences to Lord French, the lord lieutenant of Ireland stating: 'No words can express my horror at this terrible disaster. It is incredible in its cold-blooded cruelty.'⁸⁸ Reference to the loss of Lady Phyllis was made in private letters. Ethel Dillon wrote to her mother, Lady Clonbrock, expressing sympathy for the duchess of Abercorn: 'it is an awful way for her to lose Lady Phyllis.'⁸⁹ This blow to the Abercorns was on top of the loss of their son,

⁸¹ *Larne Times*, 19 Oct. 1918; See also, Philip Lecane, *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster Disaster* (Penzance, 2005), p. 66.

⁸² Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 241.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 242.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 243.

⁸⁷ Anson, *Victorian days*, p.243; see also, Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, p. 186.

⁸⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 19 Oct. 1918.

⁸⁹ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 13 Oct. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795 (10)); see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, pp 74-87.

Captain Arthur John Hamilton of the Irish Guards in November 1914.⁹⁰ Writing to Ralph Wicklow, brother-in-law of Captain Hamilton, Mr. J Schmidt relayed how the captain had died; he ‘fell near Ypres in the early morning of the 9th inst. He was shot through the head once, whilst leading a charge of some Indian troops. He was attended to by the Germans and died 10 minutes later in the arms of a German 1st Lieutenant who related these facts to me.’⁹¹ As Georgina Preston, viscountess Gormanston lamented, there was ‘no security now for anybody in this dreadful war...endless lives lost, it is ghastly and one doesn’t see the end.’⁹²

‘A brave face on our sorrow’

In June 1917, Violet Trench, baroness Ashtown sent Lady Clonbrock a ‘little book’ which she hoped would console Augusta during her grief for the death of her husband, Gerald. Violet had received the book a year previously when her eldest son, Frederic, died of wounds received in battle at the age of twenty-one.⁹³ ‘It is hard to accept the inevitable’, she wrote, ‘we must not let our sorrow overshadow the light by which others have to live and God helping us – we will do our best ... to put a brave face on our sorrow and to help others realize ... as we believe in the Life that is to come, ... that our loved ones are safe in good keeping and that someday we shall meet again.’⁹⁴ Evidently Augusta found it a comfort as Violet wrote a few days later to say she how glad she was that Augusta had liked it. Writing at Christmas that year [1917] Violet sympathised: ‘I am sure you feel as I do, that sympathy is just everything – and helps one to bear the sorrow which otherwise would seem to crush one.’⁹⁵ Grief was now part of the everyday experiences, not only amongst extended family members but also in the aristocratic community at large. Hence many women found that they were the givers of solace to others to whom they had no kin connection. Olive Guthrie informed her sister-in-law, Leonie Leslie, of a widow she was trying to help following the loss of her husband on a hospital ship where he was working. While dealing with his death the unfortunate woman discovered that her son had also been killed and her only remaining son was about to leave for France that same day. Olive

⁹⁰ Lord Arthur John Hamilton, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [19 Nov. 2015].

⁹¹ J. Schmidt to Ralph Wicklow, 12 Nov. 1914 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS38,606/7).

⁹² Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 9 Nov. & 31 May (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/3).

⁹³ The Hon. Frederic Sydney Trench, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [20 Nov. 2015].

⁹⁴ Violet Ashtown to Augusta Clonbrock, 17 Jun. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792(6)).

⁹⁵ Violet Ashtown to Augusta Clonbrock, Dec.1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792(9)).

wrote: ‘one felt incapable of saying anything in a grief such as hers, pour soul. The husband had volunteered as a hospital orderly – and gave up a good job to go – London seems so black and dreary.’⁹⁶ Leonie herself had a similar experience when a Mrs Fowler was visiting her at Castle Leslie. The lady’s husband, Colonel Fowler, unexpectedly arrived with news that their son had been killed. Writing to thank Leonie he stated that ‘I think God just sent her to you so that you might comfort and uplift her as you know so well how.’⁹⁷ What women were facing was not only their own grief and loss, but also that of other women in their circle in an unprecedented manner and scale. Their support and reliance on one another proved invaluable particularly as many had first-hand experiences of dealing with such grief. Often as part of the process the lock of hair, a framed picture, a resting place or even a place dear to the departed became consolations to those who had suffered loss.

The Great War had an impact on the make-up of aristocratic Irish families.⁹⁸ The 5th Baron de Freyne who succeeded to the title in 1913 was killed in action in 1915 at the age of thirty-two.⁹⁹ While the title was secure and passed to his half-brother, the family were further depleted by the deaths of three other brothers, George aged twenty-five in 1915, killed in action; Ernest aged twenty-three died in 1917 from wounds, and Edward died in a POW camp in 1918 aged thirty-two years. The earl and countess of Bessborough lost their son Cyril in 1915 aged thirty-three, as well as two nephews, Cyril and Michael, who were twenty-one and twenty-two respectively.¹⁰⁰ The Castle Stewarts lost two sons as did the duc de Stacpoole. Other families lost the head of the family: William Parson the 5th earl of Ross died of wounds in 1918, and Thomas Pakenham the 5th earl of Longford was killed in August 1915.¹⁰¹ While these families had heirs to retain the family title, others such as Baron Rosmead lost his only son, Hercules, in September 1915 at the age of twenty, rendering the title extinct upon the Baron’s death.¹⁰² The death of an heir meant that a title often skipped a generation such as when the 4th earl of Erne lost his heir Henry in October 1914. When the earl died in December of that year it was his seven-year-old

⁹⁶ Olive Guthrie to Leonie Leslie, n.d. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44).

⁹⁷ Col. Fowler to Leonie Leslie, n.d. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38).

⁹⁸ See Martin, ‘Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War, 1914-19’, pp 39-40; see also, Dooley, *The decline of the Big House in Ireland*, p.124; Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, pp 165-86.

⁹⁹ *Western Mail*, 14 May 1915.

¹⁰⁰ *Dover Express*, 8 Oct. 1915; *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 17 Jan. 1916; *Gloucester Journal*, 31 Aug. 1918.

¹⁰¹ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 10 Jun. 1918; *Dublin Daily Express*, 4 Sept. 1915.

¹⁰² *Birmingham Mail*, 9 Oct. 1915.

grandson, John, who inherited.¹⁰³ Similarly, the 5th earl of Ranfurly passed the title on to his grandson as his son, Thomas, was killed in action in 1915.¹⁰⁴ For Elizabeth Browne, countess of Kenmare, monuments to the dead scattered throughout the country were pointless. Writing in 1925 she urged that money for ‘obelisks, cenotaphs, triumphal arches’ be used instead for the assistance of ‘the fathers and mothers, the wives and children of the dead soldiers, but also to those men whose harder fate it is to have survived the war, only to live crippled and helpless, and often suffering in mind as well as in body.’¹⁰⁵ Poignantly, she pleaded that ‘our children have asked you for bread, and you have given them a stone.’¹⁰⁶

Impositions of the war on daily life

Shortages, escalating prices, and increased taxes and duties were a reality of the war period. While visiting in England, Clodagh Anson felt like she was ‘left to starve’ living as she was primarily off poorer meat cuts such as offal and ham.¹⁰⁷ This appears to have been the pattern of the war period with family members in England complaining about food quality or lack thereof, or requesting food from Ireland. Dowager Lady Gormanston, while living at Woburn Hill, enquired about the availability of food in Ireland stating that in England ‘it is becoming increasingly difficult – butter, milk, tea, bread, meat – everything is short.’¹⁰⁸ Similarly Ethel Dillon, while nursing in London, indicated to her mother, Lady Clonbrock that some shortages and restrictions were in place. Certain fresh food items could not be found ‘for love or money’ while other items such as sugar were in such short supply that her cousin had to have paper ornamentations on her wedding cake.¹⁰⁹ On another occasion Ethel relayed how her aunt Harrie was in a ‘great state about coal ... racking her brains as to how to manage’ as the kitchen burned more than the household allowance.¹¹⁰ While residing with her maiden aunts in Leamington, Ethel found that her aunt Kate Dillon ‘rather glories in the tribulation of economies in fire and food.’¹¹¹ Kate meanwhile was conscientiously economising, and experimenting with foraged foods as a means of improving and varying their diet. Her niece described Kate

¹⁰³ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 21 Apr. 1915.

¹⁰⁴ *The Scotsman*, 5 Feb. 1915.

¹⁰⁵ *Irish Examiner*, 10 Feb. 1925.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁷ Anson, *Victorian days*, p.233.

¹⁰⁸ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 15 Jan. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

¹⁰⁹ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 10 Mar. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(10)).

¹¹⁰ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 18 Sept. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795 (10)).

¹¹¹ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 5 Oct. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(10)).

as having ‘a mania for making jam of every kind of thing. She uses honey for sugar and puts rose hips, elderberries, mountain ash and unripe blackberries, peppermint lozenges and every other horrid thing in and then wants us to taste it.’¹¹²

The notion of self-denial and sacrifice had been promoted from the outset of the war with the government using such terminology to promote frugality and even to justify increased taxes. Civilians in both England and Ireland were encouraged to show they were ‘perfectly prepared to take their share of the burden of the war’ by supporting indirect taxes on items including beer and tea.¹¹³ Several newspapers reported that ‘panic prices’ and ‘abnormal increases’ were unnecessary and were particularly hard on workers and small farmers.¹¹⁴ While this view was an attempt to stop deliberate hoarding of supplies and profiteering, prices affected all sections of society. For the aristocracy, these aggravations took the form of restaurants having ‘meatless’ days, as encountered by Lady Inchiquin while on a trip to London.¹¹⁵ Towards the end of her three week visit to her sons she lamented about the unpleasant food in the city: ‘I do long for some good milk, and butter and Dromoland cream!! The puddings and sweets are horrid and the fish is insipid. London is not the place to be in now.’¹¹⁶ Significantly in Ireland the landed aristocracy were not overtly discommoded by food controls though the prices had increased, particularly on vegetables, eggs and butter.¹¹⁷ Eileen Preston, viscountess Gormanston noted that the peaches produced on the estate had gained a good price: ‘it will eke out the house keeping money nicely.’¹¹⁸ Eileen also subsidised their income and no doubt their larders by keeping chickens with the aim of selling the surplus, and was keen to take advice from her farmhands in relation to setting land to pasture as ‘the prices of cattle are prohibitive.’¹¹⁹ Clodagh Anson noted that the lack of sugar was significant and: ‘the bread was perfectly uneatable, full of grits and buttons and black-beetles,’ while meat and butter were plentiful.¹²⁰

¹¹² Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 11 Oct. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(10)).

¹¹³ *Dublin Daily Express*, 18 Nov. 1914.

¹¹⁴ *Derry Journal*, 10 Aug. 1914; *Dublin Daily Express*, 8 Aug. 1914; see also, Pennell, *A kingdom united*, p. 167.

¹¹⁵ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 1918 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/10).

¹¹⁶ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 9 Mar. 1918 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/10).

¹¹⁷ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 3 Aug. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,4275).

¹¹⁸ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 10 Aug. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

¹¹⁹ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 8 May 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427;/6).

¹²⁰ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 233.

Throughout the war, Lady Eileen Preston was keenly aware of how tight things were financially: ‘precious little has been coming in ...since the war.’¹²¹ She was immensely proud to report that £50 had lasted five weeks despite having had just enough to cover the house accounts.¹²² As her husband Jenico Preston was away on military duties with the Royal Irish Fusiliers, Eileen was at the helm as far as the estate and its finances were concerned. With the assistance of a steward, Edward Synge, she participated in decisions regarding the expenditure on the estate, the sale of cattle, and also issued instructions regarding the use of meadows and the harvest. Throughout, she kept in regular communication with Jenico updating him though somewhat critical of his attempts to control from a distance. She wrote:

I really think now you have your military work you ought to leave these estate matters to him [Synge], for it is impossible to do both sets of work well. Now do attend to what I say, for once. If you are to do your military work well you must give it all your attention and you can’t if you’re bothering about these other matters re: the land, which is in Synge’s place to do. What are you paying him his big salary for if you don’t get enough work out of him?¹²³

Though Jenico’s promotion to captaincy as a Railway Transport Officer (RTO) at the North Wall in Dublin improved his salary, his accommodation at a hotel in the capital cost £16 a month. Hence he was keenly aware of the financial constraints that were becoming all the more evidenced during the war. Perhaps motivated by financial worries Eileen urged Jenico to ‘get on’ and be more assertive in the army. During his posting in Dublin she spent much time at her mother’s house at Bansha, Co. Tipperary, which avoided the expense of running Gormanston Castle. Certainly Eileen and Jenico owed a lot to Lady Butler who subsidised their income by £25 per week, and provided Eileen with sanctuary during her third pregnancy in 1915.¹²⁴ However the couple’s money worries continued and Eileen intimated as much to the dowager viscountess, Georgina, who wrote from her residence in London: ‘I wish I could help you but I am broke to the world as you know and I don’t know where I am to find the winter money for here.’¹²⁵

¹²¹ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 26 Apr. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/7).

¹²² *Ibid.*

¹²³ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 23 Oct. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

¹²⁴ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 5 Aug. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/7).

¹²⁵ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 14 Nov. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/1).

Georgina was living with her daughter-in-law, Belle, while her son, Dick, was away at war, assisting with the care of the couple's three young children, and helping with expenses.¹²⁶ Eileen and Jenico contemplated letting the Gormanston Castle to the Flying Corps but this did not come to anything so from 1916 Eileen aimed to lease it privately.¹²⁷ She finally had a reply to her advertisement from a Mrs Cryan, who Eileen described as 'a nice creature, tho' hideous to look at, and full of money.'¹²⁸ Eileen deemed Mrs Cryan 'jolly lucky to get it for such a song' though she was grateful as '£100 in our pockets is better than letting the house lie fallow.'¹²⁹ Eileen's delight at having 'pulled this off' was particularly satisfying as her mother Elizabeth, Lady Butler, had warned her it would be extremely difficult to find a tenant.¹³⁰ Lady Butler had been trying unsuccessfully for years to lease a similar property.

Shortage of food and financial constraints were only two of a wide array of inconveniences faced by the aristocracy. The unavailability of petrol caused concern for many women particularly in relation to their war-time activities. Involved in work for the SSFA and the sphagnum moss depots in county Waterford, Clodagh Anson found that her duties had to be organised in order to minimise travel and thus save petrol. The effect was that that her work was limited to three days per week to coincide with the moss-depot days.¹³¹ It was noted that 'everyone is laying up or selling their cars,' a direct result of the lack of fuel.¹³² Additionally, the social lives of the elite was impacted with many entertainments limited or completely cancelled. Adelaide Guinness, viscountess of Iveagh for example did not hold her usual house party for the Punchestown races in 1914 and all her intended entertainments were cancelled.¹³³ It was considered inappropriate to have festivities when the country was at war and people on the whole did not regard it 'good form' to be flashy with money. The *Dublin Daily Express* scathingly observed that 'some classes of the community ... are far more concerned about "good form" than they are by the promptings of patriotism.'¹³⁴ However, while people were still spending

¹²⁶ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 3 Jul. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers MS 44,426/3).

¹²⁷ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 15 Jan. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers MS 44,426/2).

¹²⁸ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 3 Jul. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

¹²⁹ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 30 Jun. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

¹³⁰ Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 3 Jul. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/6).

¹³¹ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 243.

¹³² Eileen Preston to Jenico Preston, 26 Aug. 1916 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

¹³³ *Dublin Daily Express*, 13 Apr. 1914.

¹³⁴ *Dublin Daily Express*, 4 Jan. 1917.

money, they were ‘careful not to do so promiscuously.’¹³⁵ In adhering to this principle, Mina Beresford entertained ‘in a quiet way every Wed & Thurs’ something she felt justified in doing as she had not ‘any blood relations at the War.’¹³⁶ Her reasoning for her ‘gregarious’ behaviour was that she simply could not ‘see why one should not see one’s friends.’¹³⁷ In much the same way Lady Fingall attended weekend parties, dinners and other engagements while in London. Though the purpose of her visit was to attend her husband who was hospitalised there, she greatly enjoyed the gatherings which undoubtedly were a respite from the war.¹³⁸

The aristocracy relied heavily on letters and telegraphs to keep track of loved-ones away at the front and remain connected to their networks of family and friends. It was little wonder that any postal and telegraphic delays proved tiresome, causing annoyance not alone for businesses but for the public alike. Delays and interruptions proved frustrating and heightened anxiety. When Helen Dillon, Lord Clonbrock’s sister was grievously ill the issue with the post became particularly apparent. Kate, her younger sister lamented the fact that she had had no letters or newspapers from Ireland and felt ‘very cut off.’¹³⁹ This letter was posted on 27 April 1916 and did not reach Augusta Dillon, baroness Clonbrock until 4 May. Similarly, Lady Eileen Preston noted the disruption to the delivery of newspapers which came by post: ‘two *Times* have come – of Ap 26th and 27th – but no *Irish Times*.’¹⁴⁰ Of greater significance were the anxieties caused by inefficiencies of the War Office which were exacerbated by postal delays. Lady Georgina Preston became increasingly concerned when she had not heard from her youngest son Hubert, who was serving as a captain in the Royal Irish Regiment.¹⁴¹ Even though she wrote frequently her letters did not reach him which she found ‘despairing’ particularly as he had requested personal items such as tobacco.¹⁴² She wrote: ‘his letters to me only take two days but I have not heard now for some days, so am very uneasy.’¹⁴³ Part of her unease was due to the reports of family friend, Captain Desmond O’Hara, of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers,

¹³⁵ *Dublin Daily Express*, 4 Jan. 1917.

¹³⁶ Mina Beresford to Leonie Leslie, n.d. (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38 Folder 5).

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

¹³⁸ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 367.

¹³⁹ Kate Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 27 Apr. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,792(9)).

¹⁴⁰ Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 6 May (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/1).

¹⁴¹ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 7 Feb. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/1).

¹⁴² Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 5 Sept. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

¹⁴³ *Ibid.*

who died of wounds in August 1915 having ‘lingered for nearly three weeks.’¹⁴⁴ When initially informed by the War Office, the telegram to his family merely stated ‘wounded, particulars will follow’ which led them to believe that ‘his wound wasn’t bad and that he was on his way home in a hospital ship.’¹⁴⁵ However, no further communication was received until notice of his death arrived.¹⁴⁶ As a consequence, when Hubert Preston was wounded for a second time in 1915, Lady Georgina was especially anxious for news particularly after receiving the initial telegram. She wrote: ‘I spent all yesterday running about getting my passport and everything ready... they won’t let me go unless he is really bad I hear, but I am ready now in any case and I have also put irons in the fire about getting him into Lady Ridley’s Hospital if they send him on leave.’¹⁴⁷ Fortunately, Hubert was shipped back to England where his head wound was treated.

Despite disruption to services and the increasing threat of sinking, travel across the Irish Sea remained essential to the aristocracy. Though once an effortless journey, it now caused immense anxiety and necessitated careful planning particularly for those who had children travelling to and from schools in England. There is no evidence that families interrupted their children’s education during this time. According to Clodagh Beresford submarines ‘swarmed thickly’ around the south Irish coast and even replenished supplies from locals who were staunchly anti-English.¹⁴⁸ The tell-tale periscopes could be seen from the cliffs near her home and though Clodagh and others in the area spent considerable time ‘telling the authorities in London, but oh no, they knew better and refused to pay any attention or do anything about it.’¹⁴⁹ Lady Emily Mahon enlightened her mother, Lady Augusta, about the torpedo attack on the 5th Arklow lightship by a German U-boat. She revealed that ‘the captain of the U-boat said he loathed and abominated his job and he gave the men [of the lightship] plenty of time to get clear... the German commander said “we know where all your mine sweepers are and I’ll tell you when your patrols will come up” – (naming an hour) and he was right!’¹⁵⁰ With stories such as this it was unsurprising that Clodagh Anson anticipated the return of her children

¹⁴⁴ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 5 Sept. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2); Lieut. Henry Desmond O’Hara, Commonwealth War Graves Commission, available at www.cwgc.org [29 Mar. 2016].

¹⁴⁵ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Preston, 5 Sept. (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/2).

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁷ Georgina Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 9 Sept. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,426/1).

¹⁴⁸ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 239.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁰ Emily Lady Mahon to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

from school with great unease: ‘I used to lie awake all night wondering and thinking, perhaps they are sinking.’¹⁵¹ When Rosslare harbour finally ceased operations due to the danger posed by submarines, travel between the islands was via Kingstown. Clodagh recalled the lengthy task facing her: ‘I used to collect school-children all along the line starting out from Lismore with my own and about six more.’¹⁵² In total the journey took thirty-six hours to reach London all the while having the responsibility of taking care of other people’s children who did not desire to go themselves.¹⁵³ Lady Eileen Preston wrote to her husband that ‘I have visions of having to take to the boats with a kid under each arm when we’re going over!! I shall certainly be glad when we land safely at the other side. I daresay those beastly submarines won’t chase the Rosslare boats – tho’ if they did they would certainly catch them as they are much slower than the mails.’¹⁵⁴ When Lady Ethel O’Brien decided to visit her son, Sonnie, in 1918 it caused a disagreement with her husband, who was concerned for her safety. On arrival in London she sent him a letter: ‘most of the ladies on board sat in the deck saloon with their life belts on; no smoking is now allowed on deck in case of showing a light or of spies signalling. We came at a tremendous rate, it is really horrible crossing over.’¹⁵⁵ Lord and Lady Kilmaine noted that the mail boats arriving into Kingstown came into port ‘from all sorts of unexpected directions – miles out of her usual course,’ undoubtedly in an effort to lessen potential attacks.¹⁵⁶ Even Lady Fingall recollected the anxious travel to find her juvenile son, Gerald, who without his parents’ permission had managed to join the Mechanical Transport as a private. She had to try and find him and embark on the crossing ‘with the Irish Sea full of submarines.’¹⁵⁷ Significantly the dangers that crossing the Irish Sea presented did not interrupt the school schedules of the children of the Irish aristocracy. They continued throughout the war period to travel to and fro as indeed their parents did, visiting family and friends. Despite the sinking of the *Lusitania* which resulted in the deaths of over 1,000 passengers and the *Leinster* with over 500 lives lost, there prevailed an attitude of recklessness or arrogance.

¹⁵¹ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 241.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁴ Eileen Gormanston to Jenico Gormanston, 1 Feb. 1915 (N.L.I., Gormanston Papers, MS 44,427/5).

¹⁵⁵ Ethel Inchiquin to Lucius Inchiquin, 14 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,504/10).

¹⁵⁶ Edith Lady Mahon to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

¹⁵⁷ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 364.

‘A supreme moment’¹⁵⁸

When the war finally drew to an end, the reaction from women was very mixed ranging from joy, to poignancy, from sorrow to unease. Marjory Leslie wrote to her mother-in-law Leonie that ‘our nerves have become so highly keyed that we won’t know what to do at first. It will be like a dream too good to be true or else the war will seem like some impossible nightmare.’¹⁵⁹ Lady Edith Mahon wrote to her mother stating: ‘everything seems wonderful this morning – your letter giving such a good account of Moppy [her sister Ethel Dillon], and the stop press in the *Evening Mail*, (which we hope is true!) saying the armistice is signed!’¹⁶⁰ A few days later on 12 November she thanked her mother for her telegram with news of the end of the war. She proclaimed: ‘that will be a telegram to stick in the newspaper book, won’t it!’¹⁶¹ Her joy is evident and the worries she held during the war years summed up in her words: ‘fancy no more fighting – and all our prisoners coming back – and the war won!’¹⁶²

Peter Martin claims that we can have little idea how noble families felt about the war, but clear evidence is available from many women who lived through the experience to challenge this assertion.¹⁶³ Lady Fingall made her views clear when she wrote: ‘when the Armistice came at last, we seemed drained of all feeling. And one felt nothing. We took up our lives again, or tried to take them up. The world we had known had vanished. We hunted again, but ghosts rode with us. We sat at table, and there were absent faces.’¹⁶⁴ For others the war period brought a complete change of life. Clodagh Anson felt that those who had ‘dull lives’ prior to 1914 suddenly found themselves occupied with depots, hospitals, committees, ‘meeting quite a different set of people, mixing with everyone of a higher or lower social scale than themselves.’¹⁶⁵ After four years this hectic life was gone and many ‘confessed that they missed it terribly when it was over and things had gone back to normal again.’¹⁶⁶ Others had to deal with personal loss; wives and mothers

¹⁵⁸ *Hull Daily Mail*, 11 Nov. 1918.

¹⁵⁹ Marjorie Leslie to Leonie Leslie, 8 Nov. 1918 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/44).

¹⁶⁰ Lady Edith Mahon to Lady Augusta Clonbrock, 8 Nov. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

¹⁶¹ Lady Edith Mahon to Lady Augusta Clonbrock, 12 Nov. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795 (8)).

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Martin, ‘Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War, 1914-1919’, p. 30.

¹⁶⁴ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 367; see also, Cannadine, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy*, pp 85-6; Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, pp 184-7.

¹⁶⁵ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 244.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

who had lost husbands and sons had the most difficult burden to bear. Leonie Leslie movingly wrote: ‘death has not terror or horror for me – I love life – but it will be good someday to be with our then Beloved ones “over there”. In olden days we did not speak of Death – so as not to depress each other – but all that feeling has gone – Hasn’t it?’¹⁶⁷ Her son’s room, remained the only tangible evidence of his existence, where on the walls ‘still hung trophies of his army days in India - the hooves and antlers of animals he had shot - and on the tables stood those yellowing photographs of his sweethearts and his polo ponies.’¹⁶⁸ Indeed for many the war years left them with a sense of living life in the past.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

The overall effect of the war on daily life was minimal in Ireland. Certainly ostentatious spending and lavish entertaining was considered in poor taste and curtailed. Travel continued between the islands regardless of the risk, and children continued to be schooled in England, returning to Ireland during holidays. Though slight inconveniences occurred in relation to some shortages, the aristocracy in Ireland had little to complain about. However, for many families the war period proved a difficult time dealing with loss and grief while trying to maintain some semblance of normality. The deaths of loved-ones, who were otherwise fit and healthy, was a challenge for women. The promise of a future was shattered, and dealing with the lasting emotional affects were difficult. This became a shared experience for many families where women relied on one another for emotional and psychological support, such as Elizabeth Browne, countess of Kenmare and Ettie, Lady Desborough. For others, like Leonie Leslie, the death of her son Norman would remain a life-long anguish. Her only comfort was to sit in his undisturbed bedroom each year on his birthday. The memory of sacrifice and duty would linger.

¹⁶⁷ Leonie Leslie to Constance Leslie, 1916 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/32 Folder 7).

¹⁶⁸ Leslie, *The gilt and the gingerbread*, p. 124.

¹⁶⁹ A. Hoyes to Leonie Leslie, 17 May 1924 (N.L.I., Leslie Papers, MS 49,495/2/38 Folder 4).

Chapter 6: Aristocratic women and the Great War

As with all social classes the aristocracy encountered a multiplicity of experiences during the Great War. There were few amongst the aristocracy who did not have a personal and direct involvement in the war. Women's engagement in the Boer War has been considered a 'rehearsal for the First World War' and it was this latter conflict which saw an unprecedented involvement by aristocratic women in charitable organisations and war-time activities.¹ Through their organisation of a plethora of charities, and their fund-raising, the lives of many enduring the hardships of war were greatly helped. A sense of duty and patriotism came to the fore and dominated the focus of aristocratic women from the beginning of the war. Wartime activities such as the care of soldiers, the wounded, prisoners of war, refugees and families enabled many women to expand their social function beyond the traditional home and demesne, while enabling them to contribute in a real and practical way to the overall war effort.

Response to war: Lady Beatrix Beresford, Lady Augusta Dillon and Lady Henrietta MacDonnell

In September 1914, the earl of Meath made an appeal to women in the *Irish Times*:

Let every woman see that she is preparing herself for her part in the mighty warfare, which has its spiritual as well as its material and physical side. Let women fit themselves for eventualities which may never occur, but which, if they arrive, will test to the utmost their courage, their endurance, and their fitness to be helpmeets [sic] to heroes. Let them consider all manual work honourable which may render the task of the men easier...let them ever be cheerful and confident – never cast down by disasters and thus give courage to all around them.²

The message was clear, men were needed for the Front, while women were required to take up the slack at home. The earl himself 'promised a bounty of £5 to the family of every recruit amongst his employees who in the course of this month enlists for the war'

¹ Jane Potter, 'Valiant heroines or pacific ladies? Women in war and peace', in Deborah Simonton (ed.) *The Routledge history of women in Europe since 1700* (London, 2006), p. 275; see also, Anne Summers, *Angels and citizens, British women as military nurses, 1854-1914* (London, 1988); Letters from Lord Castletown to Clare Castletown, 1897-1900 (N.L.I., Castletown Papers, MS 35,295 (6-8)).

² *Irish Times*, 9 Sept. 1914.

while promising to keep open their positions until they returned home.³ For women of the aristocracy duty implied the support of their menfolk, and the assistance with the war effort by whatever means they could. From the outset it was believed the war would only last a couple of months, which likely prompted many women to get involved and establish themselves as capable local and regional organisers. Lady Headfort swiftly responded by establishing the County of Meath Fund, and by the end of October 1914 was able to report the procurement of 137 nightshirts, 45 bed jackets, 14 dressing gowns, 770 bandages, 70 pillow cases, along with undergarments all of which had been distributed through the Red Cross and St John Ambulance Associations.⁴ In addition, 104 shirts were sent directly to the Leinster Regiment, and 110 womens' and childrens' garments 'for use by refugees from Belgium.'⁵ She was pleased to report too that 'paid employment has been found for 36 poor women in the county,' who assisted in making garments such as socks and belts for the troops. She hastened to add that demand was urgent and she would be grateful for 'further subscriptions or offers of work.'⁶ Similarly, Augusta Lady Clonbrock, managed to gather together 371 items of attire, bed linen, and medical supplies which she delivered to the British Red Cross Society in Dublin early in November 1914.⁷ The secretary of the society proudly announced that almost 60,000 articles were forwarded to London to aid the comfort of 'our sick and wounded soldiers and sailors.'⁸

While efforts such as these continued throughout the war, several women came to the fore, assuming responsibility and leadership roles beyond expectations. These included Beatrix, marchioness of Waterford and her role in the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot (IWHSD).⁹ The organisation 'had its origin in the effort made by Lady Waterford' and her determination to establish a depot at Portlaw, close to her home at Curraghmore, Co. Waterford.¹⁰ Once the Portlaw depot was up and running Beatrix Waterford, using her 'genius for business organisation' and her 'unfailing courtesy and tact', surrounded

³ *Irish Times*, 9 Sept. 1914; see also Bence-Jones, *Twilight of the ascendancy*, pp 165-7; Arthur Marwick, *Women at war 1914-1918* (London, 1977), p. 38.

⁴ *Irish Times*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁷ *Dublin Daily Express*, 7 Nov. 1914.

⁸ *Ibid.*; see also, Pennell, *A kingdom united*, pp 194-5.

⁹ See Margaret Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), pp 27-37; Thomas P. Dooley, *Irishmen or English soldiers?* (Liverpool, 1995).

¹⁰ *Dublin Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1917.

herself with a ‘devoted band of voluntary workers,’ and set about establishing a centralised organisation utilising the support of an ‘executive committee of ladies’ who actively associated with her.¹¹ In 1916 the group opened a new centralised premises at 40 Merrion Square, Dublin. While the depot was under the auspices of the BCRS and St. John Ambulance Association, the work was carried out by a host of female volunteers primarily engaged in the procurement of supplies for the war effort. Items were sourced locally at wholesale prices and then sorted, packaged and sent on from the depot. The women involved made bandages and surgical dressings, their needlework room made a variety of clothing and slippers for invalids, the linen room sorted, cut up and re-made items, while the stock room arranged and packaged goods ready for despatch. One newspaper noted that while the depot was only open one month, 400 ladies had ‘registered as workers, and the daily average attendance is almost two hundred.’¹² Each woman who worked at the house, paid two shilling for registration and a six pence fee per week thereafter which went towards the maintenance of the building. In this way every penny received in subscriptions went towards the purchase of materials for the hospital requisites.

By the end of the first year’s operation the IWHSD was able to report over ‘a million of medical and surgical appliances for their soldiers’ with 1,500 registered workers working out of 76 sub-depots around the country.¹³ The following year, 1918, the depot had 2,000 registered workers who were sending 15,000 requisites weekly to the war hospitals.¹⁴ Perhaps Beatrix Waterford’s abilities are all the more remarkable as she was widowed at thirty-four years of age, her husband, Henry, having accidentally drowned at Curraghmore in 1911. Left with six children between the ages of three and thirteen she evidently encouraged her three daughters to engage in the war effort from an early age. Blanche, Kathleen and Beatrix, aged seventeen, sixteen and thirteen respectively all took part in work at the depot at Portlaw from 1915, making war hospital supplies and picking sphagnum moss.¹⁵ Both Blanche and Kathleen took carpentry classes presumably to undertake the production of splints. Kathleen later went to her Lansdowne grandparents

¹¹ *Dublin Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1917.

¹² *Irish Times*, 7 Jan. 1916.

¹³ *Dublin Daily Express*, 25 Apr. 1917.

¹⁴ *Daily Mirror*, 13 Feb. 1918.

¹⁵ British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.co.uk [3 Mar. 2016].

English home, Bowood in Wiltshire, where she nursed on the wards for over a year from 1918 to 1919.¹⁶

Perhaps the most valuable asset that aristocratic ladies had was their position, which they used to endorse an array of organisations. They acted as conduits for war work within their own regions, establishing local branches, often acting as presidents of such groups, advertising and promoting activities amongst women of their own class and those of the upper middle classes.¹⁷ For Lady Augusta Dillon the Galway War Fund Association (GWFA) and particularly the Prisoners of War Fund became the central focus of her existence during the war period. The GWFA was comprised of many prominent members of the aristocracy. Lady Clonbrock was president throughout the war period, and in 1916 had Sir William and Lady Mahon (her son-in-law and daughter), Mrs de Stacpoole, wife of the duc de Stacpoole, Lady Philippa Wiathman of Merlin Park, Lady Sophie Bellew of Mountbellew, and Lady Ashtown of Woodlawn House. The following year the numbers had increased to include Lady Ardilaun of Ashford Castle, Lady Clancarty of Garbally Park, Lord Killanin of Spiddal House, Viscountess Gough of Lough Coutra, and the Hon Mrs Plunkett of Tuam.¹⁸

It is evident that Lady Clonbrock's involvement with the prisoners of war was not alone driven by a compulsion to play her part, but highlighted her emotional connection to the men. Many soldiers who wrote to her introduced themselves as originating from Galway, or as members of the Connaught Rangers whose regimental depot was at Renmore in Co. Galway.¹⁹ Those not in this regiment trusted that their link to Galway would entice packages from the fund. In an effort to obtain parcels, some men even requested receipts for the goods supplied to them, the intent being that the goods would be paid for upon their return home.²⁰ Parcel contents varied from basic food-stuffs of tea, sugar, cocoa, milk, biscuits, tinned fish and meat, dripping, soup powder, chocolate, to tobacco, cigarettes and items of clothing including under-garments, socks, boots, shirts, trousers,

¹⁶ Hon Katie Beresford, BRCS, available at www.redcross.co.uk [3 Mar. 2016].

¹⁷ See Pennell, *A kingdom united*, pp 77-8.

¹⁸ Galway War Fund Committee, Feb 1916 and 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (4)).

¹⁹ Gerry White & Brendan O'Shea (eds.), 'Summary Information Document detailing the Irish Regiments of the British Army up to 31st July, 1922' available at http://www.military.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Info_Centre/Docs2/archives_docs/summary_information_document_on_the_irish_regiments_of_the_british_army.pdf [2 Sept, 2015]

²⁰ J. Dodd to Mr Leverett Frye, 29 Apr. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (14)).

scarves. Even books and magazines were allowed to be received in the camps and some of the men eagerly requested such items be included in parcels. Christmas saw the arrival of very welcome parcels, which besides the staples included cake, Christmas pudding, and the ever welcome cigarettes. Bread was a difficult commodity to transport, with several men lamenting that it had turned blue from mould during the heat of summer.

The heartfelt gratitude of prisoners is evident within the short post cards they were permitted to post. The majority of the men thanked Lady Clonbrock for her kindness and wished her every success with her good works. With nothing to offer in return for the parcels and notes, the men played their part in the conventions of reciprocity by passing on their warmest and sincere thanks, enquiring after Lady Clonbrock's health and even including warm wishes to her husband and family. Private Thomas Conner wrote: 'never was anything more welcome and I am sure you could not have chosen a better assortment – as everything arrived in good condition.'²¹ They recognised too that the parcel contents were chosen to provide comfort, clothing chosen to suit the season, and treats included for those times when being far from home was emotional. If parcels arrived damaged they were keen to let Lady Clonbrock know, perhaps to improve the method of packaging. Throughout, home was prevalent in the minds of the men with frequent questions regarding the harvest, weather and conditions in the 'Emerald Isle.'²²

Augusta Clonbrock personally wrote to many prisoners, displaying a concern for their wellbeing that went beyond her civic duty. One soldier, Private William Bowes, wrote how proud he was to hear she had gone to Ballinasloe to see his parents and thanked her for relating their good health to him.²³ Visitors appointed by the war fund paid visits to families of the prisoners in Galway to reassure of the men's well-being. Once contact was made with a prisoner, Lady Augusta was interested to learn who else from the Rangers were interned in the same camp. Soldiers also volunteered the names of comrades who they believed were in need of parcels. It is understandable that a relationship should build up between recipient and donor, due to the fact that many of the men had been interned since 1915 and remained in the prisoner camps until the end of the war. Hence requests

²¹ Private Thomas Conner to Augusta Clonbrock, 5 Sept. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,797 (14)).

²² John Burns to Augusta Clonbrock, 6 May 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795 (14)).

²³ William Bowes to Augusta Clonbrock, 17 Oct. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,797 (14)).

to check up on family members did not appear out of place. One soldier Private Maguire asked Lady Augusta to check on his wife as he had not heard from her for quite a while. This remained a common feature of correspondence between Private Maguire and Lady Clonbrock. He noted that he wrote to his wife every week but only heard from her every two to three months which caused his spirits to drop.²⁴

Lady Clonbrock's daughter, Lady Edith Mahon, was also involved in war work in Co. Galway. In 1915 her Red Cross branch received a grant of £5 from the Galway War Fund Association, of which her mother was President, in order to start a working party in her locality.²⁵ This was followed by a further £5 grant as well as wool with which to knit articles of clothing for soldiers. She held a jumble sale in Ahascragh that year, the profits of which along with other subscriptions and funds raised by the local Girl Guides, were used to purchase provisions for her working party. These amounted to 316 yards of flannel, 24lbs of wool, 92 yards of bag material along with cottons, tapes and pyjama girdles. The output from the working party up to May of 1916 included 20 flannel day shirts, 38 pyjamas, 25 flannel night shirts, 53 pairs of socks, 29 mufflers, 26 pairs of mittens and 385 hospital bags. The work party was also engaged in the hand-picking of sphagnum moss in the district which they supplied to the Irish War Hospital Supply Depot for hospital dressings.²⁶ Branches such as Lady Edith Mahon's would have comprised both middle and upper class women in the area who wished to contribute either in money or time or both to the war effort. In 1916 Lady Edith attended meetings in Brighton aiming to secure supplies for the POWs. While there she assisted at the Norfolk House depot during their fund-raising flag day, helped by local women who she described as '2nd – 3rd rate women in the most outré clothes! But probably the best type for the job!'²⁷

The local Irish branches in the county looked to the Galway War Fund Association for direction and assistance in order to make their own work efficient and worthwhile. While relying on subscriptions the association also engaged in a series of fundraising activities which was part and parcel of the majority of voluntary organisations. These included

²⁴ B Maguire to Augusta Clonbrock. 23 Jul. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,797(14)).

²⁵ See, Eileen Reilly, 'Women and voluntary work' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Paseta (eds.) *Ireland and the Great War. A war to unite us all* (Manchester, 2002), pp 49-65.

²⁶ Edith Mahon, Report of the Ahascragh Red Cross Working Party, Jun. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796(4)).

²⁷ Edith Mahon to Augusta Clonbrock, 19 Mar. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

collections at the races in Galway, churches and other venues, along with funds received from ‘godmothers’ (ladies who ‘adopted’ a particular POW and subscribed money towards his parcels) along with fetes, dances, tennis tournaments, entertainments and donations.²⁸ The overall aim was to foster local interest and support and thus ensure that men in service would be constantly taken care of.²⁹ An examination of the quarterly reports of the Galway War Fund Association provides an understanding of the extensive work and organisational abilities which were required to achieve success. In 1915 subscriptions amounted to £1,529, while four years later in 1919 the association had raised over £2,500.³⁰ In 1918 Lady Clonbrock, was able to assure the general meeting of the association that all work set out for that year had been achieved, and indeed the list of the accomplishments were extensive. Expenditures during the period 1916-17 included the following payments: the IWA received almost £700, the Irish Command Depot Tipperary £25, Comforts for 1st Battalion of the Connaught Rangers in Mesopotamia received £255, outlays for socks and shirts for the 5th and 6th Battalions of the Connaught Rangers came to £53, and tobacco cost £50.³¹ It is evident that not only was dedication required to achieve the aims of the organisation, but an in-depth knowledge of the rules and requirements of the War Office and a keen understanding of the needs of the men. Crucially when particular requests came in they were able to adapt and modify their work parties to meet the requirements.³² This was certainly the case when reports came through of the German appropriation of goods, particularly boots and food parcels, which were destined for the prisoners.³³ In response the Association double-checked they were not over-supplying as claimed by the German authorities.

Lady Clonbrock had much experience prior to the war with the Soldiers and Sailors Families Association (SSFA) which made her proficient and keenly aware of how an organisation could be mobilised in times of stress. Aiming to alleviate the hardships endured by the families of men on active service and during peace-time the SSFA was

²⁸ Accounts of Galway War Fund Association, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (4)).

²⁹ DGVO to Augusta Clonbrock, 9 Feb. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (4)).

³⁰ Accounts of Galway War Fund Association, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (4)).

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² Third Annual Report of the Galway War Fund Association, 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (4)).

³³ Royal Dublin Fusiliers County Kildare Committee to Augusta Clonbrock, 31 Dec. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(11)); POW Committee to Augusta Clonbrock, 19 Oct. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(11)).

established in 1885 with the Galway branch founded the following year.³⁴ Based on the principal of ‘self-help’ the Association sought to assist families with small temporary grants, help find suitable employment and made the welfare of children a priority.³⁵ Her particular interest in and dedication to the men of the Connaught Rangers and their families displayed an extension of her paternalistic role within the locality. Such was the expertise gleaned from her previous local involvements that she was able to raise over £800 within a matter of weeks for a motor ambulance for the Front complete with a plaque ‘For the Connaught Rangers and their comrades from the people of the county of Galway.’³⁶ However, it would be wrong to assume that fund-raising was an easy task or that the organisation did not suffer from financial constraints. In one general public appeal written by Lady Clonbrock in aid of the GWFA, she highlighted that funds were ‘now lower than they have been since its formation,’ with the expenditure running to over £100 per month.³⁷ She appealed to Fund members to supply £5 by any means including personal contributions, collections, entertainments and requested that ladies ‘would collect silver thimbles or bits of broken gold or silver articles, however small,’³⁸ In a similar effort and in conjunction with parishioners from Kilnasolagh, county Clare, Ethel Inchquin raised £400 to supply a motor ambulance for the Front and the support of its upkeep.³⁹ The Joint War Committee (JWC) acknowledged the operation of the Clare ambulance at Boulogne and stated it was ‘doing very good work.’⁴⁰ Unfortunately the JWC was unable to let her have a photograph of the car, ‘owing to the fact that we are not allowed to take photographs on the other side.’⁴¹

The GWFA worked closely with the Irish Woman’s Association (IWA) which had been formed in 1915 to provide food, clothing and comforts to POW’s of the Irish regiments at the Front.⁴² It was administered by Lady Henrietta MacDonnell, ably assisted by her daughter, Anne, as secretary. In May of that year the Association moved from their tight

³⁴ Soldiers and Sailors Families Association, available at www.ssafa.org.uk [24 Mar. 2016]; SSFA Galway meeting, 5 Oct. 1886 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

³⁵ SSFA Galway meeting, 5 Oct. 1886 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(8)).

³⁶ Clonbrock Papers, (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 19,671).

³⁷ Appeal from Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(11)); see also, Pennell, *A kingdom united*, p. 170,

³⁸ Appeal from Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(11)).

³⁹ Joint War Committee to Ethel Inchiquin, 14 Aug. 1916 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁴⁰ Joint War Committee to Ethel Inchiquin, 27 Aug. 1915 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Reilly, ‘Women and voluntary war work’, p. 65.

space in Victoria Street, London to rooms provided by King George V at Kensington Palace. The esteem the monarch had for the invaluable work of the Association was made clear in his decision.⁴³ The primary function of the IWA was to organise fortnightly parcels for men of the Irish Regiments, which ultimately meant the exclusion of Irish men serving in British regiments. The premise here was that these men would be taken care of by those supporting English regiments. Subscribers could pay for parcels to be sent to a specific soldier, while soldiers who had no family or friends to supply their needs could be afforded a 'Godmother', a lady who was willing to contribute to any soldier not in receipt of comforts from family.⁴⁴ The Association prided itself on being non-political and non-sectarian while the procurement of patronesses aimed to ensure that the association had branches throughout Ireland.⁴⁵ Lady Clonbrock worked closely with the IWA to ensure that prisoners were not duplicated on both association's registers. This required careful organisation which saw Lady Clonbrock in regular communication both with the barracks in Renmore and with Henrietta MacDonnell in order to establish the regiments of men. In this way soldier's names were regularly passed between the two organisations to ensure they were on the correct register and receiving the most appropriate type of aid.

However, disruptions and delays to the supply of parcels did occur and were due to several factors including overlapping of services and inefficiencies.⁴⁶ The IWA was well aware of the problems particularly when it came to the Director General of Voluntary Organisation (DGVO). The DGVO had been established to centralise the plethora of voluntary organisations which sprung up at the outset of the war. When Lady Clonbrock ran into logistical problems getting parcels delivered directly from Galway to her POWs, she inquired from Henrietta MacDonnell how best to achieve this task.⁴⁷ Lady MacDonnell advised that via the DGVO was 'not a good one' as the DGVO pooled their supplies resulting in 'ludicrous things being sent to men in warm climates, and vice versa.'⁴⁸ She assured Lady Clonbrock that by using the DGVO there was no guarantee that items collected by the Galway committee would actually reach the intended

⁴³ Irish Women's Association, Sept. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796 (3)).

⁴⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁵ Ibid.

⁴⁶ B. Maguire to Augusta Clonbrock, 1 Apr. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 796 (14)).

⁴⁷ Henrietta MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 2 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(3)).

⁴⁸ Ibid.

recipients. Instead items got ‘mixed up with what other people have collected, and sent out to the various bases to be distributed among the various battle areas.’⁴⁹ Lady McDonnell noted that at the IWA ‘we really do know better how to choose things’ appropriately ‘with regard to the wants of the particular regiment.’⁵⁰ She added that the IWA as a recognised War Charity had ‘been extremely fortunate in our parcels reaching the Front, and we are certainly acknowledged to hold the record for parcels reaching the Prisoners in Germany.’⁵¹ However the amount of red-tape required was ‘quite frightening’ though evidently increased during the war period as the government attempted to combat abuses.⁵²

Undaunted by the ever-changing bureaucracy the women of the IWA battled on and by 1918 the Association had 3,464 prisoners on their registers. Additionally, there were 424 Connaught Rangers listed as POWs with the majority held in Germany, followed by Bulgaria and Turkey. According to Lady MacDonnell ‘the Rangers especially have been very much neglected, and considering the length of their captivity, the Irish Regiments have been very badly treated all round.’⁵³ The IWA had been disappointed that so few of their men had been sent to Holland under agreements to have POW’s moved nearer Britain for repatriation. Once back on English soil the Reception Committee for POWs under the direction of the War Office made plans for the welfare of the men once they were discharged from hospital. Lady MacDonnell was on this committee and was shocked at the gaunt state of the soldiers arriving who were ‘in much worse condition than any other batch that I [Lady MacDonnell] have seen, except perhaps the first lot in 1916.’⁵⁴ A new initiative of Henrietta MacDonnell commenced in 1918 which saw the IWA undertake a scheme to assist officer prisoners of war. Many of these men had gained promotion through valour but were ‘too poor to afford the food and clothing necessary to keep up their prestige as British officers in German prison camps.’⁵⁵ They received no food in Germany and their slender pay was sent to their wives or mothers. While the IWA did receive generous offers of goods from well off relatives, Lady MacDonnell preferred to receive money as she was able to buy in bulk and get a much better price for

⁴⁹ Henrietta MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 2 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(3)).

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

⁵² *Ibid.*; Anna MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 3 Apr. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796(3)).

⁵³ Henrietta MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 2 Feb. 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(3)).

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Henrietta MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 27 May 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 796(3)).

supplies.⁵⁶ Additionally as her supply chain was already well established, men received their parcels at a much quicker rate than when privately sent by concerned family members.

Women such as Lady Augusta Dillon, Lady Henrietta MacDonnell and Lady Beatrix Beresford devoted their energies to the war effort, out of a sense of duty and moral obligation.⁵⁷ Augusta Clonbrock was seventy-five years old in 1914 and during the war suffered the loss of her husband Gerald, in 1917, after fifty years of marriage. Though Gerald's death interrupted Augusta's dedication to her war-time activities, she decided not to resign from her position on her committees.⁵⁸ Anna MacDonnell, writing to Lady Clonbrock on behalf of her mother in 1916 stated: 'mother asks me to say that she hopes you really do realise how extremely grateful she is to you personally, ... for the extraordinary help you have always given us, and the most kind way in which you fight our battles for us...[and] in the unwavering manner in which you have always supported us in everything you have said and done.'⁵⁹ However these women were not alone and the keen interaction between the aristocracy with the people of their localities was repeated throughout many parts of the county and perhaps their enthusiasm even encouraged others who had limited interest in their locales to participate more fully. When Gladys Hamilton, countess of Wicklow died in 1917, her husband, Ralph, received many letters of condolence from a host of charitable institutions in county Wicklow. Perhaps one of the most compelling came from William Harpin writing from hospital where he was a patient. He had seen the announcement of her death in the paper and wrote: 'her life brought a smile to many homes and hearts and won for her the affection of the entire community. We can never forget her great kindness to our dear boy (who fell in the battle of the Somme) in knitting and getting others to knit comforts for the men of his brigade transport. Were he living today he would be indeed sorry.'⁶⁰ Some ladies received public recognition for their endeavours. In 1920 Lady Clonbrock received an OBE (Order of the British Empire) for her work with the Prisoners of War Help

⁵⁶ Henrietta MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 27 May 1918 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 796(3)).

⁵⁷ See Pennell, *A kingdom united*, pp 77-8; see also, Margaret Downes, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort', pp 27-37; Marwick, *Women at war, 1914-1918*, p. 38.

⁵⁸ *Dublin Daily Express*, 31 May 1917.

⁵⁹ Anna MacDonnell to Augusta Clonbrock, 2 Dec. 1916 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,796(3)).

⁶⁰ William Harpin to Ralph Wicklow, 15 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., Wicklow Papers, MS 38,607/1 Folder 2 of 2).

Committee and recognition of her role as President of the Fund for Prisoners.⁶¹ Beatrix Waterford was made a Dames Grand Cross for her work as the head of the IWHS in 1919.⁶²

Belgian Refugees

Another cause during the war which caught the public imagination was the plight of Belgian refugees, fleeing their homeland after the invasion by Germany. Instrumental in the growth in support for the Belgian refugees were the stories printed in the newspapers and circulated by those who had fled the country. The atrocities perpetrated against the Belgians and their influx into Britain, and later Ireland, perhaps the reality of war.⁶³ Violet Lady Ashtown quickly set up a relief fund in Waterford in 1914, appealing to ‘Brussels Old Girls or any ladies educated in Belgium’ to send what contributions they could to assist the beleaguered country.⁶⁴ She was one amongst many who answered the general public appeals for support. Clodagh Anson recalled the arrival of Belgian families in Waterford, and described the event as ‘being landed on us.’⁶⁵ Anson was chosen to receive the families arriving in Waterford because of her ability to speak a little French. She managed to communicate sufficiently to get the arrivals settled into their new homes. She wrote: ‘I got to know them so well that we managed to understand each other after a bit [two families were French speaking and two Flemish]. The chief difficulty was when they fought and sent for me to judge between them.’⁶⁶

The first Belgian refugees arrived in Dublin in October 1914, with name-tags on their coats, their meagre possessions, mostly clothing, in canvas bags.⁶⁷ The group of eighty were immediately provided with food and with the assistance of interpreters their stories were relayed to the organising committee responsible for their care. Only one complete family was included in the group, but all classes, ages and occupations were represented. Their experiences made for harrowing reading in the newspapers, where details were recounted of the abuse they suffered at the hands of the Germans before they managed to flee to Holland. Once fed, the Belgian arrivals in Ireland were dispatched to their

⁶¹ Hon. Augusta Clonbrock, BRCS, available at www.redcross.co.uk [16 Mar. 2016].

⁶² *Dundee Courier*, 9 Jan 1919.

⁶³ Pennell, *A Kingdom united*, p. 135.

⁶⁴ *Manchester Courier and Lancashire General Advertiser*, 18 Sept. 1914.

⁶⁵ Anson, *Victorian days*, p. 235.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ *Weekly Irish Times*, 24 Oct. 1914.

accommodation at Laytown, Sandymount Castle and other parts of the country.⁶⁸ In December 1915 the *Irish Times* announced that some 200,000 Belgian refugees were accommodated in England of which 20,000 were ‘members of the upper classes who are unable to support themselves and are being maintained by hospitality’ with the government providing some pocket money until such time as they ‘go out and support themselves.’⁶⁹

Late in 1914 Ethel O’Brien, baroness Inchiquin became involved with the plight of the Belgians. She set about finding suitable vacant housing in the locality surrounding her home at Dromoland Castle in Co. Clare. The basis of the support for refugees lay with local committees. The central committee based in Dublin, liaised with the local committees and provided information regarding regulations, transportation and the like. Having located a substantial property, Castle Fergus, owned by the Blood family, Lady Ethel had to organise its renovation as it had been unoccupied for some time. Her sister-in-law, Geraldine O’Brien, was married to John Blood, son of the owner Fitzgerald Blood. Though the house lacked the modern conveniences of electricity and running water a rent of £25 for the year’s lease was requested.⁷⁰ Lady Ethel liaised with the Local Government Board in Dublin, suggesting that it would be ready for use within a month and could cater for three or four families. Both the need for repairs and to fit it out with the necessities of furniture, linen, china, glass ware and cooking accoutrements were highlighted.⁷¹

In November a medical inspector was despatched to the property and verified that it was suitable for 15-20 persons, with an estimated cost of between £100 - £200 for the building’s renovation. While this money would have to be borne by the local committee, the Local Government Board advised Lady Inchiquin to hold off on getting the repairs done as they were experiencing difficulties ‘in inducing war refugees already in London to cross the Irish Channel.’⁷² Word finally came from the Board in January 1915 that parties of Belgians had once again started coming to Ireland and therefore they were now eager to know if her property in Clare was still available for occupation.⁷³ An interesting

⁶⁸ *Weekly Irish Times*, 24 Oct. 1914.

⁶⁹ *Irish Times*, 19 Dec. 1915.

⁷⁰ Fitzgerald Blood to Ethel Inchiquin, 25 Oct. 1914 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,411/2).

⁷¹ Ethel Inchiquin to Belgian Refugee Committee, 31 Oct. 1914 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁷² Local Government Board to Ethel Inchiquin, 12 Nov. 1914 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁷³ Local Government Board to Ethel Inchiquin, 19 Jan. 1915 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

question of class division was evident in a letter from the Belgian Refugees Committee in late January. The author enquired if two houses could be provided, one for poorer people and one for middle class people as the Committee had ‘quite a number of this class un-provided for.’⁷⁴ An annotation on the letter indicates that the Clare committee was prepared to accommodate two middle class families and a grouping of five or six poorer people.⁷⁵ Within a matter of days, three families were allocated to the care of Lady Inchiquin’s organisation including pilot Corel Zounekeyun, his wife and five children and an orphan girl they had taken into their care.⁷⁶ The Refugee Committee would ensure the travel fares of the group, while Ethel Inchiquin guaranteed a weekly income to support the family, of 8/- per adult and 5/- per child.⁷⁷

Newspapers during the war period were keen to address the fact that it was the ladies ‘who were always to the front in every good work,’ who took up the matter of the refugees and in a very practical manner initiated a variety of schemes to fund and support their upkeep.⁷⁸ In County Monaghan a committee led by Leonie Leslie organised the purchase of furniture, linen and household items to support Belgians in the area.⁷⁹ Leonie travelled to London to Alexandra Palace where the refugees were being housed and picked fifteen who wished to travel to Ireland. The local urban council in Monaghan had converted the old military barracks in Monaghan town into private houses. The Belgian families were housed there and the area became known as Belgian Square.⁸⁰ While the local people raised money to support the refugees, the Belgians were eager to work and amongst them were women trained in lace making. With the support of the local community, a lace-making industry was established in the town.⁸¹ The industry operated under the name Belbroid and grew steadily to employ 180 people in Monaghan, with a shop in Dublin and a mail-order business which shipped worldwide.⁸² According to the *Anglo-Celt*, as a

⁷⁴ Frances Lady Moloney to Ethel Inchiquin, 25 Jan. 1915 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Local Government Board to Ethel Inchiquin, 23 Jan. 1915 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁷⁷ Frances Lady Moloney to Ethel Inchiquin, 29 Jan. 1915 (N.L.I., Inchiquin Papers, MS 45,511/2).

⁷⁸ *Ballymena Observer*, 1 Oct. 1915; see also, Catriona Pennell, *A kingdom united* (Oxford, 2012), pp 169-71.

⁷⁹ UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, available at UN Refugee Agency <http://www.unhcr.ie/news/irish-story/the-monaghan-lingerie-factory-that-3-belgian-refugees-helped-build> [16 Apr. 2016]; *Anglo-Celt*, 31 Oct. 1914.

⁸⁰ UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, available at UN Refugee Agency <http://www.unhcr.ie/news/irish-story/the-monaghan-lingerie-factory-that-3-belgian-refugees-helped-build> [16 Apr. 2016].

⁸¹ Ibid.

⁸² Ibid; *Birmingham Daily Gazette*, 9 Dec. 1918.

result of the Monaghan industry and other work schemes throughout Ireland, half of the Belgian refugees in the country were able to live ‘without assistance from public funds.’⁸³ Certainly the efforts of many committees played a considerable role in ensuring refugees were not a burden on the public finances. Concerts, bazaars, flag days and diocesan collections were some of the means of raising much needed revenue. Prominent amongst many of these efforts were aristocratic women. Lady Evelyn Baring of Magheramorne House in Larne organised a concert in 1914, while the Countess of Aberdeen supported an Irish art exhibition in Dublin by purchasing an oil painting.⁸⁴ In 1915 artist Lady Elizabeth Butler, mother of viscountess Gormanston, painted ‘one of the finest ... works’, of a ‘colour sergeant of the Dublin Fusiliers, which she sold in aid of the Belgian Relief Fund.’⁸⁵

As soon as the war ended, most refugees sought repatriation to their home country.⁸⁶ On the eve of the departure of refugees in January 1919, Leonie Leslie wrote to the *Irish Times* of her experience working for the Y.M.C.A. committee in London which received the POWs released from their camps in Germany and Belgium.⁸⁷ During this time Leonie noted that of the returning prisoners many Irish men amongst their numbers spoke of the generous hospitality bestowed upon them by the Belgian people. Having been released from prison camps the former prisoners had been left ‘without rations, half-clothed, and [were] too weak from privation and ill-usage to walk any distance.’⁸⁸ While making their way to the British lines, they received food, clothing and solace in the homes of the Belgians. According to Leonie, ‘but for this care many of them would have died.’⁸⁹ She added that on the eve of departure of the Belgian refugees from Irish shores ‘I feel certain that the kind actions of their compatriots in Belgium to our suffering lads will appeal to many of your readers, [*Irish Times*] who will be glad to show their appreciation by giving some practical help to these exiles, who are returning to their shattered homes.’⁹⁰

⁸³ *Anglo-Celt*, 26 Jan. 1918.

⁸⁴ *Larne Times*, 24 Oct. 1914; *Irish Times*, 12 Dec. 1914.

⁸⁵ *Dublin Daily Express*, 29 Nov. 1915.

⁸⁶ *Irish Examiner*, 3 Dec. 1918; *Irish Independent*, 24 Jan 1919; *Anglo-Celt*, 26 Oct. 1918.

⁸⁷ *Irish Times*, 18 Jan. 1919.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

Voluntary Aid Detachments

The war saw many aristocratic women devote their days on a full-time basis to the physical and medical needs of wounded soldiers. The Voluntary Aid Detachments were established in 1909 by the War Office to ‘fill certain gaps in the Territorial medical services.’⁹¹ Two voluntary organisations administered the VADs: the British Red Cross Society and the St John’s Ambulance Association. While the original concept of the VADs was that they would be utilised for home service in case of invasion, it became apparent by 1914 that overseas service was also required.⁹² At this stage VAD’s were voluntary and unpaid, hence its ranks were filled with upper-class women, including many from the Irish peerage who were prepared to expand their roles and work within a reputable and socially acceptable environment. Significantly by 1915 a payment of £20 per year was introduced to boost the need for nurses.⁹³

The Hon. Georgina and Hon. Ethel Dillon, two unmarried daughters of Luke and Augusta Dillon, the earl and countess of Clonbrock, both worked for the Red Cross during the war. Georgina was engaged in secretarial duties for the Joint War Committee based locally in Galway and later at the Eccleshall Red Cross Auxiliary Hospital in Staffordshire from December 1917 to February 1918, while Ethel became a staff nurse working at the Princess Club Hospital, Bermondsey, from February 1915 to April 1917.⁹⁴ Ethel’s letters to her mother and sisters indicate that work was hard, with long hours under the watchful eye of senior nurses. Outbreaks of illness such as influenza and measles amongst staff were common and coupled with the departure of others to the front resulted in frequent staff shortages.⁹⁵ After the departure of nurse Tipping, Ethel found herself promoted: ‘this morning a new N [nurse] arrived, so I am promoted to be senior Tr. [trainer] – simply on my 3 weeks training! – it doesn’t alter my work much but I hope I shall treat her better than Dunbar treated me!’⁹⁶

⁹¹ Voluntary Aid Detachments available at www.scarletfinders.co.uk. [2 Feb. 2016].

⁹² Marwick, *Women at war, 1914-1918*, p. 21; see also, ‘Volunteers during the First World War’ available at www.redcross.org.uk [25 Feb 2016].

⁹³ Marwick, *Women at war, 1914-1918*, p 84; see also, Downes, ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’, pp 27-37; Reilly, ‘Women and voluntary war work’, pp 49-72; Nancy A Nygaard, *Too awful for words* (Wisconsin, 2002), pp 114-5; George Robb, *British culture and the First World War* (London, 2015), p. 66.

⁹⁴ Hon. Ethel Louisa Dillon, BRCS, available at www.redcross.co.uk [24 Feb. 2016], Hon. Georgiana Caroline Dillon, BRCS, available at www.redcross.co.uk [24 Feb. 2016].

⁹⁵ Ethel Dillon to Edith Mahon, 13 Mar. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(8)).

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

Once settled into her work Ethel relayed to her mother her normal daily routine at the hospital. Breakfast at 6.30 each morning, commencing work in the wards by 7 a.m. She had a mid-morning break for coffee, followed by a half-hour luncheon at noon, and an afternoon half-hour tea-break. The last food of the day to the patients was at 8.30 p.m. ‘but they [patients] all have to be in bed before we go off and as they hate going to bed so early it makes us late.’⁹⁷ Her work was primarily in the x-ray room, ‘which is a horrid job as it is full of such very delicate things, I am afraid to touch much...there is a ward’s maid who does all the dirty hard work – scrubs the floors – does the grates, and the cups and saucers are done in the kitchen – and so far I have had no horrid things to do in any way.’⁹⁸

The main stories she relayed home were of the hardships and sufferings of the men: ‘One man – said he and the others were billeted somewhere, a shell came they were all killed and he alone remains to tell the tale. Another said he and 200 or so were in a trench for 9 days up to their wrists in water and most of them have had to take their feet or lips off from frost bite – they wanted to take one of his but he wouldn’t let them and now they are mending – but he can’t stand yet and suffers dreadfully from them.’⁹⁹ Ethel particularly kept an eye on Irish patients especially those who originated from Galway, and often requested parcels on their behalf from her mother.¹⁰⁰ She wrote in 1917: ‘the casualty lists are huge each day, and I have heard that though they are fighting a good deal this isn’t the great push yet. Night Sister’s husband ... says the whole of France is so congested with munitions and guns coming up that they can hardly get up rations.’¹⁰¹ Life gradually fell into a pattern for Ethel. The matron turned out not to be the ‘terrible person’ she had been warned about, but was ‘civil and nice’, though she adhered strictly to the rule that she was not to be spoken to unless she spoke first.¹⁰² Ethel proudly sent home a photograph of herself in her uniform and gratefully looked forward to letters and flowers

⁹⁷ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*; see also, Downes, ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’, pp 33-4.

⁹⁹ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35,795(10)).

¹⁰⁰ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 12 Mar. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795 (10)).

¹⁰¹ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 26 Feb. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹⁰² Ethel Dillon to Luke Clonbrock, 9 Mar. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

sent over from Galway.¹⁰³ Life in London was not without its entertainments, and Ethel enjoyed concerts in aid of wounded soldiers.¹⁰⁴

Early in 1917 Ethel longed to get home for a few months to see her family and have some time off. Her father had been ill and though he was improving, Ethel felt detached from the happenings at home: ‘I don’t like finding all this is happening when I am away – what could have brought the gout out. Pupsey [Edith] said his arm was better, no-one ever told me that had been bad, that can’t be gout too?’¹⁰⁵ Having pointed this out, her mother and sisters wrote to assure Ethel of Lord Clonbrock’s progress and that the provision of a wheelchair proved a great comfort to him.¹⁰⁶ By mid-April Ethel was rejoicing at the prospect of a visit to Ireland and wrote to her mother that ‘it seemed so funny to feel that I was putting on my uniform for the last time tonight for so long. Matron has been very nice to me and says that though my holiday only begins on Wednesday I must have the night in bed before and wouldn’t hear of my travelling all day after the night on duty – so tomorrow I can finish my packing comfortable [sic] and go out a little and then have an early bed.’¹⁰⁷ Unfortunately, the death of her father on 13 May impacted on her holiday and also ended her nursing in London for some time. In September she had taken up duties at the hospital located at Dublin Castle but only remained there for two months. The following year, 1918, she was back nursing whole-time at the Kempston Military Hospital in Bedford, but this too was a short spell as she caught influenza which developed into pneumonia and she had to leave after two months. Ethel wrote to her mother that ‘there is a great epidemic and half the nurses are laid low and all the wards are crowded.’¹⁰⁸ Her recovery was slow and evidently frustrating as she longed to get back to work. She spent some time recuperating at her maiden aunt’s home in Brooklands, Leamington.¹⁰⁹ Her primary concern appears to have been the preservation of her health which meant finding a suitable part-time position difficult. Yet she did not want to be placed in a mere convalescent home with ‘only charming and orderly work’ to look

¹⁰³ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 12 Mar. 1915 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795 (10)).

¹⁰⁴ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 14 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹⁰⁵ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 7 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹⁰⁶ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 21 Mar. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹⁰⁷ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 17 Apr. 1917 (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹⁰⁸ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 24 Oct. 1918, (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹⁰⁹ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 13 Oct. 1918, (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10))

forward to.¹¹⁰ Finally in 1919 Ethel joined the staff at Chelsea VAD Hospital working there on a part-time basis until the hospital closed in May of that year.¹¹¹

The daughters of Baron Farnham of Farnham Court, Co. Cavan, Stella and Zoe, trained as VADs during 1915 spending three months at the Adelaide Hospital in Dublin.¹¹² Zoe, the elder was thirty-four years old while Stella was twenty-nine when they enlisted. In August of 1915 both moved to the Easton Hall Auxiliary Hospital in Suffolk, the home of the marchioness of Graham. They remained there for three weeks before moving to St. Patrick's Military Hospital, and later St. Paul's Military Hospital both in Malta where they worked for thirteen months.¹¹³ These two camp hospitals were part of the new expansion of hospitals on the island.¹¹⁴ St Patrick's was ready to receive patients from mid-August 1915 when almost 500 patients who had suffered minor injuries were transferred from the over-crowded institutions on the island. Within two weeks it was almost at full capacity housing 978 patients.¹¹⁵ In the three months from July to September 1915, Malta had received over 22,000 sick and wounded soldiers. St Paul's Hospital opened in the autumn of 1915 to deal with the escalation of numbers and was largely used for cases of dysentery and enteric, both of which were rife amongst the soldiers. By 1917 several of the hurriedly built hospitals were closed as the casualties had abated.

The varying conditions at Malta and the increased urgency in northern Europe was most likely the reason why Zoe and Stella were moved to No. 2 General Hospital at Le Havre in France in 1916, where they remained until 1919.¹¹⁶ In 1917 Stella suffered from a severe reaction to an inoculation which caused her to be hospitalised. She recalled: 'I couldn't breathe and wasn't really fully conscious... I believe my pulse was non-existent for some time. I was sick most of the night and next day.'¹¹⁷ This was followed by a bout of jaundice which meant she could not work for a period of time.¹¹⁸ She was the cause of

¹¹⁰ Ethel Dillon to Augusta Clonbrock, 11 Oct. 1918, (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(10)).

¹¹¹ Hon. Ethel Louisa Dillon, British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.co.uk [24 Feb. 2016].

¹¹² Hon. Zoe Emma Maxwell & Hon. Stella Frances Maxwell, British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.co.uk [24 Feb. 2016].

¹¹³ Ibid.

¹¹⁴ G.R. Bruce, 'Malta Military Hospitals 1915-1917', available at <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/190.html> [3 Mar. 2016].

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Hon. Zoe Emma Maxwell & Hon. Stella Frances Maxwell, British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.co.uk [24 Feb. 2016].

¹¹⁷ Stella Maxwell to Arthur Farnham, 10 Oct. 1917 (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS. 18, 616/4).

¹¹⁸ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, 13 Oct. 1917 (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS. 18, 616/4).

great excitement in the General Hospital ‘as no one had ever heard of such a case and I think I scared them all a bit.’¹¹⁹ She even had a visit from the pathological specialist Col. Pasteur who informed her she was a ‘most interesting case.’¹²⁰ Jokingly she appealed that the war would be over before she had to endure yet another inoculation, but she assured Aileen that she ‘had the very best of attention here and been most comfortable. They certainly do look after us well when we go sick.’¹²¹ She could not have been more comfortable recuperating as she was at a villa in Le Havre which had previously belonged to the actress Sara Bernhardt and came complete with a little garden and a wood at the back.¹²²

Certainly news of the sisters was a welcome relief for the Farnham family who had to contend with Arthur, Lord Farnham and his brother, Denis, being away on active service. Both Stella and Zoe enjoyed packages of ‘good things’ sent to them by Aileen to France. Stella particularly felt homesick to think of the Maxwell family all together for the festive season: ‘what wonderful times you must be having...it must have made a tremendous difference to you having them home and I am sure Arthur needs the rest.’¹²³ Notwithstanding the work load and busy schedule Stella still managed to send some ‘hankies and chocs’ to her nieces, Marjory and Verena, and her nephew, Somerset, at home in county Cavan.¹²⁴

Her own Christmas was not without its jovialities and entertainments. Despite it being hard work, and the hospital being full to capacity, she detailed her day in a lengthy letter home. The men received ‘a stocking or rather a bag...they had cigarettes, nuts, sweets, etc., some sort of a little present (combs, etc.) ...so you can imagine the din when we came on duty! They were just like a lot of children!’¹²⁵ A concert followed consisting of ‘songs, chorus, instrumental, dancing...nearly the whole staff was taking part so you can imagine how much work was done! The whole festivities were in B ward, Zoe’s ward; 250 men had tea and it was then cleared for the concert.’¹²⁶ Zoe at this time was ill and

¹¹⁹ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, 13 Oct. 1917 (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS. 18, 616/4).

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, n.d. (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS 18,616/7).

¹²⁴ Stella Maxwell to Marjory Maxwell, 3 Jan. 1918 (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS 18,616/7).

¹²⁵ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, n.d. (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS 18,616/7).

¹²⁶ Ibid.

in compliance with regulations she was not permitted to be on-site. For Stella the separation from Zoe was difficult: 'I feel lonely in our little hut by myself! For the last couple of days, we have been surrounded by Germans hammering at the walls!'¹²⁷ Thankfully they were Germans making repairs to the accommodation rather than engaging in battle.¹²⁸ Stella indicated that her duties changed very little and she was still on the 'same ward, doing eyes, etc.' but she now had an additional role of dusting officers with scabies.¹²⁹ Embarrassed by this duty she felt rather tongue-tied as she didn't 'see enough of them to get over the awkward feeling. Some of them have been quite nice, but I must say, on the whole, I am not seized with a desire to nurse officers! And would rather have the Tommies as patients.'¹³⁰

The sisters remained in France until February 1919 when they ceased their work as VADs.¹³¹ They were now aged thirty-eight and thirty-three years respectively; they never married after they returned from the Front. Whether this was by choice or due to a lack of suitors is unclear. According to Virginia Nicholson many women had learned 'not to be reliant on husbands' and sought to reinvent themselves without the necessity of marriage.¹³² Neither Georgiana nor Ethel Dillon married though they were older when they joined the Red Cross, being fifty and thirty-five years old respectively. For women of a certain age or those who had chosen not to marry or had little prospects of marriage, the war provided an opportunity for a life which contrasted with their upbringing. Zoe Maxwell ended up owning and running a farm near Colchester, even offering to provide training for able-bodied girls who could not afford to attend an agricultural college.¹³³ Lady Hermione Blackwood, daughter of the marquess and marchioness of Dufferin and Ava, trained for four years as a nurse at the London Hospital and qualified as a district nurse, joining the Queen Victoria Jubilee nurses.¹³⁴ The profession of nursing was known to be exacting in its training and in its vetting of candidates. For women of gentle birth, training was difficult as no distinction was made between those who had a coronet and

¹²⁷ Stella Maxwell to Aileen Farnham, n.d. (N.L.I., Farnham Papers, MSS 18,616/7).

¹²⁸ Ibid.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

¹³¹ Hon. Zoe Emma Maxwell & Hon. Stella Frances Maxwell, British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.co.uk [24 Feb. 2016].

¹³² Virginia Nicholson, *Singled out* (Oxford, 2008), pp xi-xiv.

¹³³ *Sheffield Independent*, 28 Mar. 1932; see also, Nicholson, *Singled out*, p. 144.

¹³⁴ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 1 Feb. 1902.

those who had not.¹³⁵ Known by choice as simply ‘Miss Blackwood,’ Hermione was one of an increasing number of aristocratic women who ‘scorn delights and live laborious days’ as nurses.¹³⁶ Hermione Blackwood rose to become a superintendent of the Queen’s nurses and became president of the Irish Nursing Association.¹³⁷ When war broke out she nursed at Standish House, Gloucestershire, and later served in France and Belgium for the Red Cross.¹³⁸ As one of the women ‘revolting against the frivolity of fashionable life’ she devoted herself to ‘useful avocations and missions of mercy.’¹³⁹ As one newspaper commented, nursing offered women ‘without a home circle of her own’ a unique experience ‘not only for her mental powers, but for her natural womanly gifts, and for the maternal instinct which was her birth-right.’¹⁴⁰ For unmarried women, the duty and care of others, normally seen as the preserve of married women, could now be achieved respectably through a nursing career.¹⁴¹

It was said that nurses were only valuable when they entered the profession with the right spirit; they had to be prepared to give rather than receive.¹⁴² Lady Mary Plunket, daughter of the earl and countess of Fingall, was twenty-three years of age when she started nursing in 1915.¹⁴³ She worked until 1917 at the Royal Herbert Military Hospital at Woolwich, for which she received a Scarlet Efficiency Stripe from the British Red Cross.¹⁴⁴ Lady Mary Hamilton, daughter of the duke and duchess of Abercorn ‘did not consider herself gifted in the direction of nursing’ but felt the need to do something for the war effort.¹⁴⁵ She underwent training at Vickers-Armstrong munitions factory in Erith, Kent and found she had an enthusiasm and energy for this line of work. Described as ‘the latest craze’ educated ladies signed up to work eight hour shifts at the factory during the week-ends, in order to allow the regular workers a period of rest.¹⁴⁶ Mary Hamilton was injured in a

¹³⁵ *Burlington Evening Gazette* 15 Dec. 1904.

¹³⁶ *Cheltenham Chronicle*, 22 Feb. 1902.

¹³⁷ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 Jun. 1910.

¹³⁸ Lady Hermione Blackwood, British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.org.uk, [1 Mar 2016].

¹³⁹ *Burlington Evening Gazette* 15 Dec. 1904; see also, Martin, ‘Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War, 1914-1919’, pp 35-6.

¹⁴⁰ *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 Jun. 1910; see also, Downes, ‘The civilian voluntary aid effort’, pp 33-4.

¹⁴¹ See, Nicholson, *Singled out*.

¹⁴² *Sheffield Daily Telegraph*, 13 Jun. 1910.

¹⁴³ Lady Mary Plunkett, BRCS, available at www.redcross.org.uk [2 Mar. 2016].

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*; see also, Fingall. *Seventy years young* (Dublin, 2005).

¹⁴⁵ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 21 Dec. 1915.

¹⁴⁶ See, Lucinda Gosling, *Great War Britain: The First World War at home* (Stroud, 2014); *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 17 Jul. 1915.

work-place accident in 1915 but continued working in munitions, eventually becoming a forewoman in charge of eight machines.¹⁴⁷ She resigned from her work in 1917 when she got married.¹⁴⁸ Her younger sister, Lady Cynthia, engaged in nursing duties for several months during 1915 at her local hospital in Strabane. Like her sister, Cynthia opted for munitions training.¹⁴⁹

The Hamilton sisters and Lady Mary Plunket gained invaluable life experiences which they might not otherwise have acquired. One newspaper commented in 1916 that young ladies were ‘devoting themselves to more serious matters, in common with all the other girls of similar age,’ becoming zealous war workers, rather than indulging in the inconsequential pursuits of times past.¹⁵⁰ Certainly George de Stacpoole believed that the work done by nursing staff during the war could not ‘be too highly praised or valued.’¹⁵¹ He lost his two youngest sons in France. He was grateful for the recovery of his severely wounded son, Francis, in 1918, which he acknowledged was due to the excellent work of the staff of the military hospitals both in France and in England.¹⁵²

According to Lady Daisy Plunkett: ‘one could not ever exaggerate the greatness of English women during the war.’¹⁵³ Great ladies ‘sold their jewels, gave up their houses for hospitals, and worked themselves, often in the humblest capacity night and day.’¹⁵⁴ While much of this statement is difficult to verify, Daisy did sell a diamond necklace and stomacher to provide money for her Red Cross activities.¹⁵⁵ In Galway, Lady Clonbrock sought damaged or broken precious metals from ladies on her committees, but there is little evidence of women selling jewellery in order to promote the war effort.¹⁵⁶ Ellen, countess of Desart, arranged for Aut Even Hospital in Kilkenny to be used as a military hospital, but the facility had been built as a civilian infirmary in 1915, equipped ‘with the latest and most up-to-date improvements.’¹⁵⁷ Others who were not suited for nursing

¹⁴⁷ *Aberdeen Evening Express*, 17 Jul. 1915.

¹⁴⁸ See, Myra Baillie, *The women of Red Clydeside* (Hamilton, 2002); Barbara McLaren, *Women of the war* (London, 1918).

¹⁴⁹ *Sunday Mirror*, 27 Aug. 1916; *New Zealand Herald*, 12 Apr. 1919.

¹⁵⁰ *Lincolnshire Echo*, 1 Mar. 1916.

¹⁵¹ de Stacpoole, *Irish and other memories*, p. 193.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*

¹⁵³ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 360.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁶ Appeal from Augusta Clonbrock, n.d. (N.L.I., Clonbrock Papers, MS 35, 795(11)).

¹⁵⁷ J.L. McAdams, *Ellen, Countess of Desart and Captain The Hon. Otway Cuffe* (Kilkenny, 1958), p. 28.

engaged in whatever way they could. May Pery, countess of Limerick with her 'dark hair and great Irish eyes and delicious brogue' ran a canteen at Victoria station, for soldiers on their way to the front.¹⁵⁸ In fact Lady May was renowned for her war-time charitable activities and was considered 'one of the pioneers of canteens for soldiers at railway stations.'¹⁵⁹ On one day alone in July 1916 some 2,000 men had been fed at one station which was regarded as 'one of the best in London.'¹⁶⁰ Similarly Olive Guthrie, sister of Sir John Leslie, along with Lady Fitzgerald ran a club for soldiers on leave.¹⁶¹ Those who remained in Ireland knitted 'endless socks and mufflers and sleeping helmets' while others worked in the 'depots where the pathetic little parcels of the poor were received, which represented so much love and sacrifice.'¹⁶² Those widowed or in mourning 'never wore black' such was their determination to remain hopeful and dutiful. Lady Fingall remembered one lady who she had last seen at the Coronation, and had lost two sons in the war, who 'never missed a day of her hospital work.'¹⁶³

Conclusion

Women during the period of the Great War had increased responsibility while their menfolk were away at war. While many worked in tandem with men, others took on the mantle of full responsibility for an array of organisations, committees and activities and indeed it can be argued that they were the driving force behind much of the support mechanisms of the war. Lady MacDonnell, Lady Clonbrock and Lady Waterford are just three examples. Women applied themselves to their activities depending on their family circumstances. Those with young children assumed lesser roles and were less prominent participants in comparison to those with older children or none at all. As many women had family and friends actively engaged in military efforts, there was a compulsion to be dutifully supportive in whatever way they could. Those who chose to enter into the nursing profession gained life experience and knowledge far removed from their upbringing.

¹⁵⁸ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 361.

¹⁵⁹ *Nottingham Evening Post*, 30 Dec. 1918.

¹⁶⁰ *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, 27 Jul. 1916.

¹⁶¹ Fingall, *Seventy years young*, p. 361.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

For some women their efforts during the war period was an extension of activities in which they were already engaged within their local communities. Women such as Lady Clonbrock were already equipped with organisational skills and proficiencies which were easily transferred into the new roles brought about by the war. The activities of the plethora of organisations which blossomed at the outset of the war often overlapped. In time with the central organisation co-ordinated through the War Office, these organisations became productive and efficient and proved invaluable to the overall war effort. However, without women this would not have been achieved. The experiences of women during the war period varied greatly, but from the personal accounts and newspaper reports, the toll of the war was great. Few families managed to escape unscathed and the wounds inflicted on the womenfolk were great and lingered for many years.

Conclusion

The role of aristocratic Irish women is an aspect of Irish history, particularly in relation to the country house, that has not been examined to date, with the result that very little exists in terms of publications. This thesis deals specifically with the role of women in relation to acceptable female behaviour of the time, focusing on marriage, the family, the estate and the environs.

The experiences of Irish aristocratic women were varied and complex though in many regards they had much in common with their English counterparts. Society in Ireland was based along similar foundations as those in England with many families, both sides of the Irish Sea, related through marriage. With this in mind it is evidenced that marital arrangements centred on social standing and finances, with compatibility, reputation, and health vital prerequisites to a union.¹ The season, 'coming out', balls, country house parties and other social occasions all operated to ensure that the young only met those of equal and acceptable social standing. At the centre of this contrived social scene were women, usually the mothers of prospective brides, who operated and organised events to facilitate the marriage market. Yet this closed endogamous group was breached by the equally ambitious, social-climbing American brides who flocked to the shores of Britain and Ireland, aiming to secure a titled husband. Their unpopularity among the aristocracy was in part due to the competition for a scarce resource, certainly in the Irish context, and in part due to their confidence and singlemindedness, qualities which perhaps were considered more masculine in this period.

Extra marital relationships were a phenomenon of this class, though it is difficult to understand the precise motivations of women who sought emotional and physical relationships outside marriage. Certainly, many women paid a high price for stepping outside the marital norm. One can conclude however that many couples came to private arrangements, whereby both engaged in extra-marital relationships. This was a solution of sorts, to a very restrictive marriage market and where some couples once married faced major problems. These include complex issues such as lack of an emotional connection, violence and philandering. Private negotiated arrangements between the couple was a

¹ Jalland, *Women marriage and politics, 1860-1914*, p. 55.

preferable arrangement than having their personal lives made public and then exploited by the worst excesses of populist journalism. The media at the time engaged in a level of voyeurism, salaciously gorging on the marital mishaps, divorces and breaches of social standing by the aristocracy. Indeed, they were hostile towards the aristocracy, gleefully documenting their marital misfortunes for their readers. The failings of the elite sold thousands of newspapers as well as promoting the nationalist cause. Many individuals wanted to read about the failings of the elite and privileged class. However, their stories brought an awareness of the human side of the aristocracy, particularly in relation to the ‘victims’ of marital breakdown and their plight in the courts. They certainly highlighted the unbalanced legal system, which was heavily in favour of men.

Women feature prominently during the significant life stages and events such as marriage, motherhood and the rearing of children. Females were taught the acceptable female roles of duty, responsibility and care, characteristics which were evidenced time and again throughout their lives. Several of these aristocratic women were the most dedicated and caring of mothers as well as acting as loyal and loving wives. These two roles were the keystones of many aristocratic women’s lives, and yet so little is written about them.

Charitable and philanthropic endeavours, while part of the duty of care of a chatelaine, can also be considered part of social control whereby deference and loyalty were rewarded by assistance. In a wider context, the social standing of aristocratic women afforded them a position of influence over others, allowing them greater scope for charitable endeavours and an assurance that their will would be carried out. This is clearly evidenced by the engagement of women during the Great War. Women stepped into the roles previously occupied by men, taking on the mantle of organising and running not only their homes and estates, but also a plethora of war time activities. They proved resourceful, utilising their status and influence in order to maximise the impact of their endeavours. It can be argued that some were waiting for such opportunities to step outside the predetermined feminine roles, eager to expand their abilities beyond the traditional duties. Others were simply utilising skills already perfected in their own private charitable endeavours. Women’s efforts, while varied, proved all the more fruitful as they united in an effortless way to achieve their aims, despite the emotional turmoil of grief and loss which touched most of their lives. It is evident that while female networks in the pre-war

period were primarily based on kinship, during the war, broader social networks came to the fore.

Aristocratic women are part of a complex and fascinating group that require so much more attention, having been neglected in the historic narrative of the nation. Nationalism has cast a long shadow over the study of Irish history, and it is time to critically reassess the role of the aristocracy. This has been the key aim of this study. An equally important aim is to widen the parameters of the study of the aristocracy to include women and children. To see aristocratic women as little more than decorative objects is to do a massive disservice to them. As shown in this study, women were historical actors and complex individuals in their own right. Therefore, as historians in the twenty-first century, the onus is to take on all the complexities of Irish history including this particular class. Serious studies of the aristocracy have to go beyond the simplistic nationalist methodology depicting the entire group as “bad” and as “the enemy”. This is not to say that there were not aristocratic men and women who exploited their tenants and servants. However, the point is, that there were others who had more nuanced relationships with their tenants and employees. It is time to take up the challenge and look at these relationships in more detail.

This thesis set out to examine the role and experiences of aristocratic women in Ireland during a period of great social, political and economic change, 1870-1918. The period examined reflects an embeddedness in the traditional roles of aristocratic women. Even though there was a gradual loosening of some values and traditions, their outlook remained firmly rooted in their own class, despite the shifting and changing social and political context around them. While this study has looked at some of the themes which emerged from the primary sources of some of Ireland's aristocratic families, it is only part of the picture. Leisure, gardening and garden design, travel, consumerism, health, and widowhood are worthy topics of study in relation to aristocratic women waiting investigation. Furthermore, though the time period of this study concluded at 1918, a natural conclusion in a sense, being the end of the Great War, how these women negotiated the tumultuous years up to the foundation of the state and beyond, is still waiting examination.

Bibliography

PRIMARY SOURCES

MANUSCRIPT SOURCES

Cavan County Archive

Farnham Papers (Donation by Simon Kenlis, 13th Baron Farnham, P025/001-007, 1897-1907).

National Library of Ireland

Clonbrock Papers (1877-1925, MS 35,791-7).

Doneraile Papers (1898-1917, MS 34,166-8).

Farnham Papers (1896-1922, MS 18,616).

Gormanston Papers (1860-1936, MS 44,422-52).

Inchiquin Papers (1896-1932, MS 45,504-16).

Leslie Papers (1836-1925, MS 49,495).

Louth Papers (, 1892-1908MS 40,099).

Wicklow Papers (1880-1916, MS 38,606; 1877-1883, MSS 3589-93).

Harvard University Press, Cambridge, Mass.

O.W. Holmes letters to Lady Clare Castletown, available at Harvard Law Library, <http://library.law.harvard.edu/suites/owh/index.php/item/43390746/19> [08 March 2014].

Somerset Heritage Centre, Taunton, Somerset

Papers of Evelyn Vesey [nee Charteris], Viscountess de Vesci (DD/DRU 90), 1891-1912.

Westmeath County Archive

Howard-Bury Papers (G/4-155, 1860-1874; P1/117-127, 1853-1879)

PUBLISHED PRIMARY SOURCES

Anson, Lady Clodagh, *Victorian days* (London, 1957).

Beeton, Mrs Isabella, *Book of household management* (1861).

Beresford, Charles, *Memories of Lord Charles Beresford* (London, 1914).

Brabazon, Reginald, (ed.) *The diaries of Mary Countess of Meath* (London, 1900).
Bowen, Elizabeth, *Bowen's Court* (London, 1984).
Cobbe, Frances Power, *The duties of women. A course of lectures* (London, 1881).
Crowquill, Alfred, (ed.). *Bentleys miscellany*. Vol ix (n.p.,1842).
de Stacpoole, Duc, *Irish and other memories* (London, 1922).
Cornwallis-West, Mrs George, *The reminiscences of Lady Randolph Churchill* (New York, 1908).
Countess of Fingall, Elizabeth, *Seventy years young* (Dublin, 2005).
Gorman, W. Gordon, *Converts to Rome* (London, 1910).
Greville, Lady Violet, *Vignettes of memory* (London, n.d.).
Hare, Augustus J., *The story of two noble lives being memorials of Charlotte, Countess Canning and Louisa, marchioness of Waterford* (London, 1898).
Leslie, Anita, *The gilt and the gingerbread* (London, 1981).
Young, Margaret F., (ed.) *The letters of a noble woman, Mrs. La Touche of Harristown*, (London, 1908).
Hamilton, Lord Ernest, *Forty years on* (London, 1922).
Somerville, Edith & Ross, Martin, *Irish memories* (London, 1917).

NEWSPAPERS

Aberdeen Journal
Anglo-Celt (Cavan)
Belfast Newsletter
Berwickshire News and General Advertiser
Birmingham Daily Post
Birmingham Mail
Blackburn Standard
Boston Sunday Post
Boston Post
Bristol Mercury
Burlington Evening Gazette
Cambridge Independent Press
Canterbury Journal
Cardiff Times

Cheltenham Chronicle
Cheltenham Looker-On
Chester Chronicle
Chicago Tribune
Daily Express
Daily Mirror
Derby Daily Telegraph
Derry Journal
Dover Express
Dublin Daily Express
Dundee Advertiser
Dundee Courier
Dundee Evening Telegraph
Edinburgh Evening News
Eire Ireland
Era (London)
Evening Telegram
Exeter & Plymouth Gazette
Falkirk Herald
Fife Free Press
Fifeshire Advertiser
Freemans Journal
Gloucestershire Chronicle
Grantham Journal
Graphic (London)
Hartlepool Northern Daily Mail
Huddersfield Chronicle
Hull Daily Mail
Indianapolis Journal
Irish Examiner
Irish Independent
Irish Times
Kildare Observer
Kilkenny People

Larne Times
Leeds Mercury
Leinster Express
Lichfield Mercury
Lincolnshire Chronicle
Lincolnshire Echo
Liverpool Daily Post
Liverpool Echo
Lloyds Weekly Newspaper (London)
London Daily News
London Evening Standard
London Gazette
Longford Leader
Los Angeles Herald
Manchester Courier & Lancashire General Advertiser
Meath Chronicle
Morpeth Herald
New York Times
New York Tribune
New Zealand Herald
Northampton Mercury
Northern Whig
Nottingham Evening Post
Oakland Tribune (California)
Otautau Standard (New Zealand)
Pall Mall Gazette
Penny Illustrated Paper and Illustrated Times
Peterhead Sentinel (Aberdeenshire, Scotland)
Portsmouth Evening News
Reading Mercury
Reynold's Newspaper (London)
Saunders's Newsletter (Dublin)
Scotsman (Edinburgh, Scotland)
Sheffield Daily Telegraph

Sheffield Evening Telegraph
Sheffield Independent
Shields Daily Gazette (Tyne and Wear, England)
Somerset Daily American
Southern Reporter and Cork Commercial Courier
South Wales Echo (South Glamorgan, Wales)
Staffordshire Sentinel
St. James's Gazette (London)
Sunday Mirror (London)
Sunderland Daily Echo and Shipping Gazette
Thames Advertiser (Waikato, New Zealand)
The Tablet (London)
Washington Post
Weekly Irish Times
Wells Journal (Somerset, England)
Western Daily Press (Bristol)
Western Morning News (Devon, England)
Western Mail (Cardiff, Wales)
Western Times (Exeter, England)
Westmeath Examiner
Yorkshire Evening Post
Yorkshire Gazette
Yorkshire Post & Leeds Intelligencer

WORKS OF REFERENCE

Bateman, John, *Great landowners of Great Britain and Ireland* (London, 1883).
Bence-Jones, Mark, *A guide to Irish country houses* (London, 1988).
Burke, Sir Bernard, *A genealogical and heraldic history of the landed gentry of Ireland* (n.p., 2010).
Burnand, Sir F.C., (ed.) *The Catholic who's who and year book, 1908* (London, 1908).
Debrett, John, *The peerage of the United Kingdom and Great Britain and Ireland*, 9th Ed. (London, 1814).

Dooley, Terence, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland: a research guide* (Dublin, 2007).

O'Leary, Zena, *The essential guide to doing your research project* (London, 2014).

SECONDARY SOURCES

Abdy, Jane & Gere, Charlotte, *The souls* (London, 1984).

Andersen, Margaret L., *Thinking about women* (Newark, 1983).

Baillie, Myra, *The women of the Red Clydeside* (Hamilton, 2002).

Beckett, J.C., *The Anglo-Irish tradition* (London, 1976).

Bence-Jones, Mark, *Twilight of the ascendancy* (London, 1987).

Biggers, Jeff, *In the Sierra Madre* (Chicago, 2006).

Breathnach, Ciara, 'Lady Dudley's district nursing scheme and the Congested District Boards, 1903-1953' in Margaret H. Preston and Margaret O' hOgartaigh (eds.) *Gender and medicine in Ireland, 1700-1950* (New York, 2012), pp 138-153.

Bunbury, Turtle, *Brabazon of Wicklow, earls of Meath* (2013).

Bunbury, Turtle, *Howard earls of Wicklow* (n.p., 2013).

Cannadine, David, *The decline and fall of the British aristocracy* (New York, 1990).

Cohen, William A., *Sex scandal: the private parts of Victorian fiction* (London, 1996).

Cullen Owens, Rosemary, *A social history of women in Ireland 1870-1970*, (Dublin, 2005).

Davenport-Hines, Richard, *Ettie the intimate life and dauntless spirit of Lady Desborough*, (London, 2008).

Dooley, Terence, *The decline of the big house in Ireland* (Dublin, 2001).

Dooley, Terence, *The decline and fall of the dukes of Leinster* (Dublin, 2014).

Dooley, Thomas P., *Irishmen or English soldiers?* (Liverpool, 1995).

Downes, Margaret, 'The civilian voluntary aid effort' in David Fitzpatrick (ed.) *Ireland and the First World War* (Dublin, 1986), pp 27-37.

Estorick, Michael, *Heirs and graces* (London, 1981).

Faust, Drew Gilpin, *This Republic is suffering: Death and the American Civil War* (New York, 2008).

Gerard, Jessica, *Country house life: family and servants, 1815-1914*, (Oxford, 1994).

Gerard, Jessica, 'Lady Bountiful: women of the landed classes and rural philanthropy' in *Victorian Studies*, vol.xxx (1987), pp 183-210.

Giddens, Anthony, *Sociology* (Cambridge, 2009).

Gosling, Lucinda, *Great War Britain: The First World War at home* (Stroud, 2014).

Grubgeld, Elizabeth, *Anglo-Irish Autobiography, class, gender and the forms of narrative* (New York, 2004).

Habakkuk, H.J., 'Marriage settlements in the eighteenth century' in *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, vol. xxxii (1950), pp 15-30.

Harrison, Brian, 'Philanthropy and the Victorians' in *Victorian Studies*, vol. ix, no. iv (1966), pp 353-374.

Hill, Myrtle, *Women in Ireland a century of change* (Belfast, 2003).

Hollett, Dave, *More precious than gold: the story of the Peruvian guano trade* (New Jersey, 2008),

Horn, Pamela, *Ladies of the manor* (Stroud, 2014).

Horn, Pamela, *High society the English social elite, 1880-1914* (London, 1992).

Jordan, Alison, *Who cared? Charity in Victorian and Edwardian Belfast* (Antrim, n/d).

Jordan, Thomas E, 'The quality of life in Victorian Ireland 1831-1901' in *Hibernian Review*, vol. vi, no. i (2000), pp 103-121.

Kavanagh, Art, *Butler of Ormonde, Cuffe of Desart* (n.p., 2013).

Kavanagh, Art, *Langford of Summerhill, Plunkett of Dunsany* (n.p., 2013).

Kavanagh, Art, *Preston of Gormanston, Taylour of Headfort, Tisdall of Charlesfort, Watson of Bective* (n.p., 2013).

Kehoe, Elizabeth, *Fortunes daughters* (London, 2004).

Kidd, Alan J., 'Philanthropy and the social history paradigm' in *Social History*, vol. xxi, no. ii (1996), pp 180-192.

Lambert, Angela, *Unquiet souls* (London, 1994).

- Lecane, Philip, *Torpedoed! The RMS Leinster disaster* (Penzance, 2005).
- Leslie, Anita, *Edwardians in love* (London, 1972).
- Leslie, Anita, *Mrs Fitzherbert* (New York 1960).
- Longford, Elizabeth, *Victoria* (London, 2011).
- Lovell, Mary S., *The Churchills* (London, 2011).
- Luddy, Maria, *Women and philanthropy in nineteenth century Ireland* (Cambridge, 1995).
- Lundberg, Ferdinand, *America's 60 wealthiest families* (New York, 1937).
- MacColl, Gail & McD. Wallace, Carol, *To marry an English lord* (New York, 2012).
- McDermid, Jane, *Women, war and revolution* (London, 1997).
- McLaren, Barbara, *Women of the War* (New York, 1918).
- Malcomson, A.P.W., *The pursuit of the heiress: aristocratic marriage in Ireland, 1750-1820* (Antrim, 1982).
- Martin, Peter, 'Dulce et Decorum: Irish nobles and the Great War, 1914-19' in Adrian Gregory & Senia Paseta (eds.) *Ireland and the Great War, a war to unite us all?* (Manchester, 2002), pp 28-48.
- Marwick, Arthur, *Women at war, 1914-1918* (London, 1977).
- McAdams, J.L., *Ellen, countess of Desart and Captain The Hon. Otway Cuffe* (Kilkenny, 1958).
- Millim, Anne-Marie, "The Victorian Diary: between the public and the private", in *Literature Compass*, Vol. vii, Issue x (2010), pp 977-988.
- Montgomery, Maureen E., *'Gilded prostitution' status, money and transatlantic marriages, 1870-1914* (New York, 2013).
- Morrow, John H. Jr., 'The war in the air' in Hew Strachan (ed.), *The Oxford illustrated history of the First World War* (Oxford, 1998), pp 265-78.
- Nygaard, Nancy A., *Too awful for words* (Wisconsin, 2002).
- Nelson, Claudia, *Family ties in Victorian England* (Westport, 2007).
- Newby, Howard, 'The deferential dialectic' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, vol. xvii, no. ii (1975), pp 139-164.
- Nicholson, Virginia, *Singled out* (Oxford, 2008).
- O'Neill, Ciaran, *Irish elites in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2013).

- Pakenham, Valerie, *The big house in Ireland* (London, 2000).
- Paterson, Michael, *Life in Victorian Britain* (London, 2008).
- Pennell, Catriona, *A Kingdom united* (Oxford, 2012).
- Phegley, Jennifer, *Courtship and marriage in Victorian England* (Cambridge, 2012).
- Potter, Jane, 'Valiant heroines or pacific ladies? Women in war and peace' in Deborah Simonton (ed.) *The Routledge history of women in Europe since 1700* (London, 2006), pp 259-98.
- Rauchbauer, Otto, *Shane Leslie, sublime failure* (Dublin, 2005).
- Reilly, Eileen, 'Women and voluntary work' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Paseta (eds.) *Ireland and the Great War. A war to unite us all* (Manchester, 2002), pp 49-65.
- Reynolds, K.D., *Aristocratic women and political society in Victorian Britain* (Oxford, 1998).
- Richmond, Vivienne, *Clothing the poor in nineteenth-century England* (Cambridge, 2013).
- Ritzer, George & Goodman, Douglas J., *Sociological Theory* (New York, 2004).
- Robb, George, *British culture and the First World War* (London, 2015).
- Rosenberg, Emily S., 'Gender' in *The Journal of American History*, vol. lxxvii, no. i (1990), pp 116-124.
- Robertson, Nora, *Crowned harp, memories of the last years of the Crown in Ireland* (Dublin, 1960).
- Satlow, Michael L. (ed.), *The gift in antiquity* (Chichester, 2013)
- Sawyer, Roger, *We are but women: women in Irelands history* (London, 1993).
- Scharlieb, Mary, *The seven ages of woman* (London, 1915).
- Schutt, Russell K., *Investigating the social world* (London, 2006).
- Schutte, Kimberly F., *Marrying by the numbers: marriage patterns of aristocratic British women, 1485-2000* (Kansas, 2011).
- Somerville-Large, Peter & Mark Fiennes, *The Irish country house: A social history* (London, 1995).
- Steinbach, Susie, *Women in England 1760-1914, a social history* (London, 2004).
- Summers, Anne, *Angels and citizens, British women as military nurses, 1854-1914* (London, 1988).

Tiernan, Sonja, *Eva Gore-Booth an image of such politics* (Manchester, 2012).

Thompson, F.M.L., *The rise of respectable society* (Cambridge, 1988).

Thorold, Algar Labouchere, *The life of Henry Labouchere* (London, 1913).

Urquhart, Diane, *The ladies of Londonderry women and political patronage* (London, 2007).

Wallace, Ruth A. & Wolf, Alison, *Contemporary sociological theory* (New Jersey, 1999).

Walsh, Oonagh, *Anglican women in Dublin: philanthropy, politics and education* (Dublin, 2005).

Ward, Paul, 'Women of Britain say go: Women's patriotism in the First World War' in *Twentieth Century British History*, vol. xii, no. i (2001), pp 23-45.

Whelan, Robert, *Helping the poor* (London, 2001).

Wilson, Deborah, *Women, marriage and property in wealthy landed families in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Manchester, 2009).

Winter, Jay, and Robert, Jean-Louis, *Capital cities at War: Paris, London, Berlin, 1914-1918* (Cambridge, 1999).

Woollacott, Angela, *On her their lives depend* (London, 1994).

Yeats, W.B., 'An Irish airman foresees his death' in *The Wild Swans at Coole, and other poems* (New York, 1919).

ELECTRONIC SOURCES

Abrams, Lynn. 'Ideals of womanhood in Victorian Britain', available at BBC history. (www.bbc.co.uk/history/trail/Victorian_britain/women_home/ideals_print.html) [13 July, 2015].

Administrative History, Royal National Hospital for Consumption for Ireland, available from https://www.rcpi.ie/content/docs/000001/117_5_media.pdf [30 March, 2015].

Florida J Wolfe, (1867-1913) available at www.blackpast.org [28 Jul. 2016].

British Red Cross Society, available at www.redcross.org.uk [2 Mar. 2016].

Bruce, G.R., 'Malta Military Hospitals 1915-1917', available at <http://www.scarletfinders.co.uk/190.html> [3 Mar. 2016].

Darley, Gillian. Octavia Hill (1838-1912), Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, available at <http://www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/article/33873?docPos=1> [20 April, 2015].

Dictionary of Irish Biography available at dib.cambridge.org.

Dooley, Terence. 'Clonbrock: History of a big house' available at http://www.askaboutireland.ie/aai-files/assets/libraries/an-chomhairle-leabharlanna/reading-room/big-houses-of-ireland/Clonbrock_HistoryOfABigHouse.pdf [11 Nov. 2015]

Find my past, available at www.findmypast.co.uk.

Holland, Evangeline, 'The American Heiress' available at Edwardian Promenade <http://www.edwardianpromenade.com/women/the-american-heiress/> [15 Apr. 2016].

House of Lords War Memorial, available at www.parliament.uk [15 May 2016].

Killarney National Park, available at www.killarneynationalpark.ie [17 Jan. 2016]

Murray, Gabriel, 'The countess of Desart, Ellen Odette Bischoffsheim, 1857-1933' available at The Jewish Magazine <http://www.jewishmag.com> [20 Mar. 2016].

Peers and Their Marriages, in *The Throne*, 1913, available at <http://www.stagebeauty.net/th-frames.html?http&&&www.stagebeauty.net/th-peerge.html> [17 Nov 2014].

Public Broadcasting Service available at www.pbs.org [29 July 2016]

Quinn, James, William Francis Butler, Dictionary of Irish Biography, available at <http://dib.cambridge.org.jproxy.nuim.ie/viewReadPage.do?articleId=a1305> [14 Mar. 2016].

Royal National Hospital for Consumption for Ireland, available at Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, www.rcpi.ie [20 May, 2016].

Soldiers and Sailors Families Association, available at www.ssafa.org.uk [24 Mar. 2016].

Thomas, Mark ‘Knocknatrina House, Laois’ available at www.abandonedireland.com [25 Jun. 2016].

UNHCR, The UN Refugee Agency, available at UN Refugee Agency <http://www.unhcr.ie/news/irish-story/the-monaghan-lingerie-factory-that-3-belgian-refugees-helped-build> [16 Apr. 2016].

Voluntary Aid Detachments available at www.scarletfinders.co.uk. [2 Feb. 2016].

Walsh, Eimear. ‘Scandal in High Society’ available at the National Library of Ireland, <http://www.nli.ie/blog/index.php/2011/07/18/scandal-in-high-society/>[17 Nov 2014].

White, Gerry & O’Shea, Brendan (eds.), Summary Information Document detailing the Irish Regiments of the British Army up to 31st July, 1922. Available at http://www.military.ie/fileadmin/user_upload/images/Info_Centre/Docs2/archives_docs/summary_information_document_on_the_irish_regiments_of_the_british_army.pdf [2 Sept, 2015]