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Women's Status in Britain during the First World War: Liberation or Obligation

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Dedication

We dedicate this work to our beloved parents, brothers and sisters for their patience with us and valuable encouragement because without their support, the work wouldn't be done.

To our relatives and all people who know us.

To our dear friends.

To all the readers of this work.

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Abstract

The First World War (1914-1918) had great effect on men as well as on women; and this was manifest in many different aspects such as human life and property, political, social and economic fields. The present dissertation is concerned with the study of the impact of the First World War on British women. When the war began, women's lives had socially, politically and economically changed because of the new circumstances as the British women filled the empty jobs left behind by males and they participated in the war effort. Given the fact that the Great War had affected women's lives in all aspects, our research is aimed at showing the main changes which had a considerable impact on women's status. Some people saw that the war was a sign of liberation for many women because it brought to them some new rights they missed before 1914. However, others thought that this status did not serve women and did not represent their freedom because it was only for the war duration as the British women were needed to fill the gaps of men in many different fields during the war. Thus, to conduct our research, we opted for a qualitative approach through the collection of relevant data. Furthermore, we adopted the descriptive analytical method in order to trace some events during that period and to verify the hypothesis. The conclusion we came to in our research shows that World War One was not an opportunity for women in Britain to achieve liberation; on the contrary they felt compelled to meet more obligations, i.e. World War One was mostly obligation rather than liberation. This study might pave the way to further researches and researchers interested in studying the status of women during World War One.

Key Words: British women, First World War, Liberation, Life, Obligation, Rights.

List of Abbreviations

FA: Football Association

FANY: First Aid Nursing Yeomanry

FDT: Field Device Tool

LSWS: London Society for Women's Suffrage

MP : Member of Parliament

NU: National Union

NUWSS: National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies

PSF: People's Suffrage Federation

RAF: Royal Air Force

UK: United Kingdom

VAD: Voluntary Aid Detachment

WAAC: Women's Auxiliary Army Corp

WCG: Women's Co-operative Guild

WFL: Women's Freedom League

WLA: Women's Land Army

WRAF: Women's Royal Air Force

WRNS: Women's Royal Naval Service

WSPU: Women's Social and Political Union

WW1: World War One

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General Introduction

General Introduction

1. Background of the Study

The majority of writings about British women during the First World War tend to focus on their roles, and how their lives changed after the war. Before the World War One, most women were banned from voting or serving in military combat roles. During the war, many saw that women had more opportunities to not only serve their countries, but also to gain more rights and independence. With millions of men away from home, women filled manufacturing and agricultural positions on the home front. Others provided support on the front lines as nurses, doctors, ambulance drivers, translators and, in rare cases, on the battlefield. This research is meant to add another specific point vis-à-vis women's status in Britain during the First World War with attempt to consider the main factors involved in the change of the status of women.

2. Statement of the Problem

By the outbreak of the First World War, the lives of many women in Britain have changed due to new circumstances. Many women volunteered on the home front as nurses, teachers, and worked in traditionally male jobs and they suffered immensely in their work because they worked in dangerous places. However, all this disappeared when the war ended which means that what British women had done in the war faded from their immediate memory, and once more they started suffering from unemployment, humility, poverty and the rise of fascism. This led numerous historians to argue whether the impact of World War One on the British women was a sign of their liberation or it was just the war obligation.

3. Aim of the Study

The present dissertation simply aims to highlight both the most changes of women's lives in Britain during the First World War and the reality behind those changes.

4. The Significance of the Research

This study attempts to show that British women were used as a solution to serve the country and to replace the men in many aspects during the First World War which has bearing on the status of women in that felt free. But, they suffered a lot and their freedom disappeared by the end of the war.

5. Research Questions

The aim of this study is to provide satisfactory answers to the following research questions:

1. Did the First World War affect British women's lives? How?
2. Did women's status during the First World War represent their freedom?
3. Did the British women enjoy the same status by the end of this war?
4. Why did Britain provide the women with the opportunity to practice some rights during the WW1?

6. Research Hypotheses

This dissertation is built on the following idea: there are hidden reasons behind the change in the status of the British women during the First World War.

In addition, all the changes took place during the war years were resulted from the obligation of the war since there was an urgent need for woman to help in that difficult situation. Therefore, women's liberation was temporary during the war because it did not continue after the war.

7. Research Methodology

In order to obtain relevant information concerning this topic and to get clear answer to the previous questions, the qualitative research is used to collect the accurate data through reading some various references such as books, articles and websites which serve the aim of the study, in addition to the descriptive analytical method to trace the important events during the war period given the fact that this method, through a process of data collection, enables the researcher to describe the situation more completely.

8. Structure of the Dissertation

In order to cover all the main points concerning this topic, this dissertation starts with general introduction which explains the main idea of this topic and provides the reader with an overview about the topic. Next, the research is organized into three chapters. The first chapter gives a general idea about women's lives in Britain before the First World War, chapter two presents the status of women during the war period. The third chapter which is the last one discusses and analyses the nature of this status. Finally, this work ends with general conclusion which summarises the main findings of the study.

**Chapter One: The Status of British Women before
the First World War**

Chapter One: The Status of British Women before the First World War

Introduction

For many years and from the overview of some people, the word women, girl, daughter, mother, sister, or any other word that is related to females, is just a word which has no value in their minds. But, in reality, this word is not just a word as they considered it. It is everything in the life, it is the light of everyone in the family, and without women life is difficult and may not continue.

Unfortunately, many women suffered a lot and they were victims in many societies in the world among the centuries. Some of them suffered from the authority of parents, others were victims under the power of husbands because some of them did not recognize the woman's value and according to them the woman is nothing. Also, the law sometimes was not with women and they did not obtain their rights socially, politically and economically.

The First World War in 1914 was a chance for many women in the world to give themselves an opportunity to fulfill prominent roles in their societies in order to change the difficult conditions they had been living in before this time. The British women were one of those women; their lives differed from century to another and from society to another.

This chapter sheds light on the life of women in Britain before the World War One. It provides a sound basis of comparison between the status of women in the early years of the twentieth century and the earlier centuries. Furthermore, it should be worth noting that this chapter lays emphasis on the political and social status of women since it is impossible to encompass all the series of events that took place during that difficult period.

1. The Social Status of Women in Britain before the First World War

1.1. Women's Lives during the Celtic Period

The British women during that period might have more independence than they had before because when the Romans invaded Britain two of the largest tribes were ruled by women who fought from their chariots (McDowall, 1989).

One of those famous women was Boadicea, or as she is known Boudicca, she was the widow of the king of the Iceni in eastern Britain who had been allied with Rome. Leaving two daughters and no son (Burns, 2010, p. 14). She had become queen of her tribe when her husband had died (McDowall, 1989, p. 8).

In AD 61, Boudicca led her tribe against the Romans. She nearly drove them from Britain, and she destroyed London, the Roman capital (McDowall, 1989, p. 8). Her subsequent rebellion was the greatest challenge to Roman rule in Britain. The rebellion at first seemed successful, particularly since the main Roman army at the time was battling the rebellious Silures on the island of Anglesey off the west coast of Britain. Boudicca's forces attacked and burned the Roman provincial capital, Camulodunum, the old Catuvellaunian capital, massacring its inhabitants. The rebels also burned London, although the population was evacuated. However, they were not able to face a full Roman army the rebellion was crushed when 10,000 Roman troops slaughtered 80,000 Britons in the Battle of Watling Street, and Boudicca committed suicide rather than become a prisoner of Rome. The rebellion resulted in the transfer of Roman provincial administration to London (Burns, 2010, p. 14).

Boudicca's story reflects the difficult conditions which many women faced during that period in Britain. Moreover, it reflects how those women suffered a lot to get their rights

and to protect their country. But, the end of Boudicca's life was horrified because she is a woman.

1.2. Women's Marriage without Respecting the Family's Relation for Keeping the Family's Property (The Anglo -Saxon)

The Kinship practices of Anglo –Saxon differed from those of the Christian British because they did not respect some family's relationship, especially in some issues concerning the marriage. One of their horrified practices was that they allowed a man to marry his stepmother on his father's death in order to protect property in the family. In addition, they were able to divorce, a practice forbidden by the church (Burns, 2010).

1.3. In the Middle Ages: Women under the Authority of Men

The life of women in the Middle Ages was hard because Church taught that women should obey their husbands. It also spread two very different ideas about women: that they should be pure and holy like the Virgin Mary and Eve, they could not be trusted and were a moral danger to men. Such religious teaching led men both to worship-and also to look down on women, and led women to give in to men's authority (McDowall, 1989).

1.3.1. Women and Marriage: Women's Marriage as a means for the Family's Wealth

Marriage was usually the single most important event in the lives of men and women. But the decision itself was made by the family, not the couple themselves. This was because by marriage a family could improve its wealth and social position. Everyone, both rich and poor, married for mainly financial reasons. Once married, a woman had to accept her husband as her master. A disobedient wife was usually beaten. It is unlikely that love played much of a part in most marriages (McDowall, 1989, p. 62).

1.3.2. The Life of Married Women

The responsibility of woman after she become wife is onerous and more complex because she was obliged to do many things and hold many responsibilities.

The first duty of every wife was to give her husband children, preferably sons (McDowall, 1989, p.62) because women were inferior as they menstruated and incomplete until they bore a child (Davis, 2014). Yet, this was the future for every wife from twenty or younger until she was forty (McDowall, 1989).

Most women, of course, were peasants, busy making food, making cloth and making clothes from the cloth. They worked in the fields, looked after the children, the geese, the pigs and the sheep, made the cheese and grew the vegetables. The animals probably shared the family shelter at night. The family home was dark and smelly. Woman's position improved if her husband died. She could get control of the money her family had given the husband at the time of marriage, usually about one -third of his total land and wealth. But she might have to marry again: men wanted her land, and it was difficult to look after it without the help of a man (McDowall, 1989, p. 63).

However, the responsibilities of the wife of noble differ from ordinary women's ones because the former had other responsibilities when her lord was away. Some of these responsibilities were :

- When her lord was away, she was in charge of the manor and the village lands, all the servants and villagers, the harvest and the animals.
- She also had to defend the manor if it was attacked. She had to run the household, welcome visitors and store enough food, including salted meat, for winter.
- She was expected to have enough knowledge of herbs and plants to make suitable medicines for those in the village who were sick.

▪She probably visited the poor and the sick in the village, showing that the rulers cared for them. She had little time for her own children, who were often sent away at the age of eight to another manor, the boys to "be made into men" (McDowall, 1989).

1.4. Women's Lives during the Tudor Period (1485-1603)

The unmarried women suffered during that period. Before the reformation many of these women could become nuns, and be assured that in the religious life they would be safe and respected. After the dissolution of the monasteries, thousands became beggars on the roads of England. Also, Life of married women was not easy because most of them bore between eight and fifteen children. In addition, many of them died in childbirth, and because marriage was often for economic purposes and it had often no relation with emotions (McDowall, 1989).

Although this dark side to those women, Foreign visitors were surprised that women in England had greater freedom than anywhere else in Europe. Although they had to obey their husbands, they had self-confidence and were not kept hidden in their homes as women were in Spain and other countries. They were allowed free and easy ways with strangers (McDowall, 1989, p. 85).

1.5. Women between the Authority of Husbands and Parents in the Stuart Age (1603 - 1714)

By the end of the sixteenth century there were already signs that the authority of the husband and the father was increasing. As a result, the loss of legal rights by women over whatever property they had brought into a marriage (McDowall, 1989). In addition, the protestant religion gave new importance to the individual, especially in Presbyterian Scotland. Many Scottish women were not afraid to stand up to both their husbands and the

government on matters of personal belief. In fact many of those who chose to die for their beliefs during Scotland 's "killing times" were women. This self-confidence was almost certainly a result of greater education and religious democracy in Scotland at this time (McDowall, 1989, p. 105).

1.6. Women's Lives during the Eighteenth Century

There were contradictions about women's lives in British society. This paradox is illustrated by the 1864 painting by Rossetti entitled 'The Blessed Beatrix'. This beautiful image of his wife, Lizzy Siddal, contrasts harshly with Rossetti's treatment of her, a woman whom he had betrayed through numerous affairs and who had poisoned herself the year before (Malcolm & Geoffrey, 1992).

The working female, in eighteenth-century Britain, was ubiquitous, to be found laboring in most fields, workshops, town streets, and homes. However, women's employment in that period was invisible in the sense that it is 'hidden from history', and less likely than men's who have left a mark on the historical record (Barker, 2016).

From another hand, the richest women's lives were limited by the idea that they could not take a share in more serious matters. They were only allowed to amuse themselves. As Philip Stanhope wrote: "Women are only children of larger growth . . . A man of sense only plays with them. . . he neither tells them about, nor trusts them with serious matters" (McDowall, 1989, p. 116).

In the eighteenth century, girls were victims of the parents' desire to make them match the popular idea of feminine beauty of slim bodies, tight waists and a pale appearance in order to get a chance of good marriage. For this purpose, parents forced their daughters in to tightly wasted clothes, and gave them only little food to avoid an unfashionably healthy appearance (McDowall, 1989).

1.7. Women and the Idea of Close Family in the Nineteenth Century

It was remarkable that the truism that “a woman’s place is in the home” was repeated frequently in the century after 1850 (D’Cruze, 2006).

The eighteenth century saw a spread of the idea of the close family which was under the master of the household. As a result, this limited the possibility for a wife to find emotional support or practical advice outside her family. Also, many women found their sole economic and social usefulness ended and family life often ended when their children grow up. As one foreigner noted in 1828, "grownup children and their parents soon become almost strangers ". In addition, in that century women were discouraged from going out to work if not economically necessary, they encouraged to make use of the growing number of people available for domestic life that means a wife was legally a man's property(McDowall, 1989). As someone wrote in 1800, "the husband and wife are one. and the husband is that one" (McDowall, 1989, p. 137).

However, The social construction of medical knowledge is particularly fascinating when concerned with women’s health in the Victorian (1837-1901) and Edwardian (1901-1910) periods (Macnicol, 1988).

After1871, the census showed that there were slightly more women than men in the population (D’Cruze, 2006, p. 48).This resulted from the emigration of men. Most Britons, whatever their political persuasion, wealth or gender, believed woman’s place was the home, where indeed most nineteenth-century women spent a great deal of their time, thanks to frequent childbirth (Farmer, 2011).

1.7.1. The Rights of Women and the Law

Victorian women were battered, frequently denied property rights and denied the right to vote (Malcolm & Geoffrey,1992, p. 14) as well as managing their households, women

were responsible for carrying out or supervising the housework. In the nineteenth century, domestic work was arduous, physically demanding and time consuming. This was true whether it was done by servants in a middle-class or upper-class household, or by wives, mothers and daughters without cash payment in working-class or lower middle-class homes (D'Cruze, 2006, p. 56).

It was almost impossible for women to get a divorce, even for those rich enough to pay the legal costs. Until 1882, a woman had to give up all her property to her husband when she married him. And until 1891, husbands were still allowed by law to beat their wives with a stick "no thicker than a man's thumb", and to lock them up in a room if they wished. By 1850, wife beating had become a serious social problem in Britain. Men of all classes were able to take sexual advantage of working women (McDowall, 1989, p. 162).

According to Burns (2010):

Under the English common law, a married woman could not possess property in her own name; unless special arrangements were made, her property was considered that of her husband. If a woman was stuck in a bad marriage, divorce was very difficult. It was almost impossible for a woman to divorce and receive custody of her children if the husband wanted to keep them. (p. 171)

Malcolm and Geoffrey (1992) stated that the government of Great Britain in the 1860s was not perfect, but it did not only consider the male interest. A Parliament of men still passed the Criminal Law Procedure Act in 1853 to try to end the evil practice of wife beating and in 1878 the Matrimonial Causes Act facilitated divorce for ill-used wives. Successive Married Women's Property Acts were to be passed to give married women the right to own property themselves even if they still had no vote (p. 20).

A number of significant Acts of Parliament were passed. The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 allowed divorce without the need for a separate Act of Parliament, but on unequal grounds. The Married Women's Property Acts in 1870 and 1882 eroded the legal doctrine of *covertures*, which stated that a married woman's property was owned by her husband. These Acts gave married women the right to control their own earnings and property (D'Cruze, 2006, p. 65).

1.8. Women's Lives in the Early of Twentieth Century

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century there was a loss of women from the countryside. This was a result of the undervaluation of women in the farming industry and the belief that women could find better employment opportunities in the towns and cities. This does not mean that women ceased to play an integral part in farm life. In the early twentieth century family farms were labour intensive, and with a shrinking domestic market and agricultural labour force, hiring outsiders was unprofitable for both men and women, the farmer's female relatives were called upon to fill the labour gap. Their work were limited including feeding animals, caring for the household and children, and operating some machinery that had traditionally been operated by men. While their work expanded in the early of the same century, Women did not wear trousers, they did not climb trees, and few ventured alone to the market to sell the family's wares. Wives assisted their husbands and while the gender division of labour on farms was lessening, it remained securely in place at the outset of the First World War (White, 2014).

1.9. Women and Education before 1914

At least until the First World War, the majority of girls in Britain received a crucial part of their education in the home. Carol Dyhouse argues that there was a strongly held

notion of schooling as encouraging academic aspirations in girls, undermining their attachment to home and to the domestic duties. All women were expected to conform to the ideology of domesticity, which disapproved of working women and which located feminine virtue in a domestic and familial setting. Domesticity, however, differed according to class, which had implications for female education. Middle-class women were ladies, for whom waged work was demeaning, indeed a slur on middle-class manhood. Middle-class girls' education, therefore, had to correspond to their status: it should inculcate the domestic ideal; and it should also polish the young lady through training in the social graces, which would render her competitive on the marriage market. There was no need for a grammar school or university education, whose function was to prepare middle-class boys for service to Church or state (McDermid, 2006,).

Middle- and upper-class women in the 19th century could not be educated past the equivalent of high school, and they were educated to that level at a much lower rate than men. They could not participate in the recognized professions in law, medicine, or the church. In addition, in middle class family would sacrifice and go without an education in order to support the sons properly. But, after the mid-19th century The situation began to improve because the expansion of the educational sector offered more women the opportunity to be teachers, a relatively more respected profession, but options were still very limited (Burns, 2010).

There were many education acts and movements concerning women's education in Britain which appeared before 1914 in order to improve, facilitate and pave the way into women and girls education. England led the way in reforms of middle-class girls' education. Two major parliamentary investigations, the Taunton Commission of the 1860s and the Endowed Schools 'Commission of the 1870s, led to improvements for middle-class girls'

schooling in both England and Wales. The Taunton Commission noted evidence which showed that the mental capacity of the sexes was virtually the same, though the education of middleclass girls before the mid-nineteenth century was, at best, frivolous, with an emphasis on the social graces (McDermid, 2006).

By the last third of the 19th century, and as a result of this movement women began receiving medical degrees. Among those women who obtained a medical degree were: Dr. James Barry, Elizabeth Blackwell, Elizabeth Garrett (1836–1917) the first British woman to be qualified and to practice medicine in Britain. But the Entrance into higher education involved choices. At first, some advocated a separate curriculum for women in higher education with less study of classical languages, math, and science and more domestic skills, such as needlework. In addition, the idea of female students which was that the entry of women into their institutions would lower their status . but this began to change during and after World War (Burns, 2010).

It was virtually impossible to refute the medical and religious arguments against higher education for women in the late-nineteenth century. There were in addition economic arguments against it, including the fear of introducing competition between the sexes for the professions, and the claim that higher education for women was an unsound investment, since they would stop work on marriage women's supreme profession (McDermid, 2006, p. 95).

2. The Political Status of Women before WW1

Before the Great War, a woman's role was considered to be within the home. Public life, including politics was widely seen as for men only. It was believed that women involved in politics would neglect their responsibilities at home (“Domestic impact of World War One - society and culture”, n. d).

However, there were women political thinkers, like Mary Wollstonecraft, who wrote in sophisticated and complex terms about the political thoughts issues that pervaded the early-modern era, such as the separation of church and state, toleration, different constitutional forms and the contract theory of government (Armitage, 2006).

2.1. Women and Party Politics

From the 1870s, although women were denied access to the parliamentary franchise, they did have the opportunity to take part in political life at a local level as candidates for school boards, boards of guardians, parish councils and later county councils. They stood as independent candidates and also as representatives of particular parties. However, the male-dominated political parties put forward contradictory messages in their attempts to attract women to their cause (Hannam, 2006).

Women also joined the socialist groups which were established in the late nineteenth century and worked for the Labour Party after 1900. This immediately raised the issue of what women's role should be, and whether they should organize separately in order to create their own political identity (Hannam, 2006, p. 191).

2.2. The Right to Vote

According to Simkin (1997), in 1865 a group of women in London formed a discussion group called the Society. The women thought it was unfair that women were not allowed to vote in parliamentary elections. They therefore decided to draft a petition asking Parliament to grant women the vote. They took their petition to Henry Fawcett and John Stuart Mill, two MPs who supported universal suffrage. Mill added an amendment to the 1967 Reform Act that would give women the same political rights as men. But the Mill's amendment was defeated by 196 votes to 73 in the house of commons (para.1-3).

In 1897 women started to demand the right to vote in national elections. Within ten years these women, the "suffragettes", had become famous for the extreme methods they were willing to use (McDowall, 1989).

However, "If women could not vote, it was because they were generally held to be emotionally and intellectually unsuited to the task. It was also held that their husbands and fathers could effectively exercise the vote for them" (Malcolm & Geoffrey, 2002, p. 19).

2.3. Women's Suffrage Movements and Organizations

Burns (2010) said that:

A women's movement, dominated by middle-class women and their concerns, emerged in mid-19th- century Britain for several reasons. Literacy and education among women was increasing. The organization of women taking part in political and humanitarian campaigns and for charitable work that increased women's and men's awareness of problems caused by lack of education, access to the professions, and the vote. The key to suffragist and women's rights activities generally was the organizing of large numbers of mostly middle-class women. (p. 172)

However, "parliamentarians spared little attention for the women's cause" (Vellacott, 2007, p. 2).

From the late of eighteenth century many women's movements and organizations had been founded, some of them are mentioned below:

2.3.1. Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU)

The WSPU was the largest radical suffrage organization, founded in 1903 by Emmeline Pankhurst and her daughters Christabel and Sylvia (Burns, 2010). The founding of

the WSPU was followed by a wave of militant suffrage activism. The members of which became known as the suffragettes (Myers, 2013).

“The leading members of the WSPU, a militant suffrage group, severed their links with the Labour Party in 1907 and were actively hostile to Labour Party candidates during election” (Hannam, 2006, p. 196).

2.3.2. The National Union of Women’s Suffrage Societies (NUWSS, NU)

The NUWSS had been formed in 1897, as the result of the coming together of two London-based groups, and the formation of a federation of local societies across the country. It was a development of the First Women’s Suffrage Society which was founded by John Stuart Mill, Mrs. P.A. Taylor, Emily Davies, and others (“John Stuart Mill - The later years”, n. d). Three years later their leader would be Millicent Garret Fawcett (Myers, 2013).

During its first ten years, the growth of the movement took place mainly at the periphery; in the North of England in particular. Outreach was to men as well as to women, on the logic that the support of those who had the vote was needed (Vellacott, 2007, p. 1).

From 1903, when the NU convened a National Convention in Defence of the Civil Rights of Women, the organization took a more active role in the parliamentary constituencies, with local committees pressing parliamentary candidates to pledge their support if elected. The NU continued until 1910 to be dominated mainly by London suffragists who are the members of the London Society for Women’s Suffrage (Vellacott, 2007).

2.3.3. London Society for Women's Suffrage (LSWS)

It was formed by members of the Kensington Society after Mill amendment was defeated. John Stuart Mill became president and other members included Helen Taylor, Lydia Becker, Emily Davies, and others (Simkin, 1997).

Like the NU, the LSWS made efforts to place needy women in work, setting up a useful Employment Exchange (Vellacott, 2007, p. 34).

2.3.4. People's Suffrage Federation (PSF)

The PSF was created by a merger of the Co-operative Women's Guild and the Women's Labour League in 1909—and led by Margaret Llewelyn Davies. The group believed that the Women's Suffrage movement was being damaged by class divisions, such as those that split the Women's Social and Political Union and the Women's Freedom League. They also thought that universal suffrage would be more popular with the liberal Government, as it was likely that voting rights only for privileged women would likely increase the conservative vote (Smith, 1998).

2.3.5. Women's Freedom League (WFL)

It was founded by Charlotte Despard and Teresa Billington-Grieg in 1907 (“Suffragettes - Timeline”, n. d, p. 1). It attracted the support of many socialist suffragists and a significant number of the WSPU's branch societies. The WFL, while formally non-party in its affiliations, remained close to the Independent Labour Party (Holton, 2006, p. 247).

The WFL kept its focus on suffrage and feminism, and was vocal on all questions of women's rights. The WFL worked on the same issues taken up by the NU (Vellacott, 2007).

Also, there were other women's organizations such as:

- In 1851, the Sheffield Female Political Association was formed and brought a petition in support of enfranchising women to the House of Lords
- In 1865, the Kensington Society was founded as a discussion space for supporters of enfranchising women
- In 1867, the Manchester Suffrage Committee was founded (a precedent for Manchester's pivotal role in the suffrage movement)
- Also in 1867, the Kensington Society became the London National Society for Women's Suffrage
- In 1871/2 the Central Committee of the National Society for Women's Suffrage was established
- In 1883, the Primrose League (a Conservative group) were established
- In 1886 the Women's Liberal Federation was formed
- In 1889, the Women's Franchise League was formed
- In 1906, the National Federation of Women Workers is established (Myers, 2013).

Conclusion

In the pre-war years, British woman was considered inferior and her role in society was to look after her house, kids, and husband. Although women missed many rights, they should keep their mouths shut. The men mistrusted women in doing serious works like political activities as they were seen not as clever as men. Working class women suffered greatly in their lives; however, women from middle class lived in better conditions than the other British women. Women wanted to be treated as equal as men; therefore they started to call for their rights.

In the eighteenth century, some women did work as doctors, lawyers, teachers, and writers. But, by the early nineteenth century, they were domestic servants in factories. To sum up, despite the harsh conditions women had been facing in Britain, they were seen more free when they were compared to women from other countries like France and Germany.

Chapter Two: The Impact of World War

One on British Women

Chapter Two: The Impact of World War One on British Women

Introduction

Broadly speaking, all the wars in the world had great impact on everyone in society, and may create and require new condition for life. The First World War was one example of those wars which was in the period from 1914 to 1918, this war also had strong effect on every member of the family in the world. Especially, the women because this war was as a starting point to change lives of many women and it was a turning way for most of them. Women in Britain were one of those women who were influenced by this war.

Women's participation during the Great War changed the lives of women in Britain from housewives, mothers and girls into workers outside their home to replace the men because they had gone to fight in that period. Consequently, a large number of British women felt free with this new status which opened to them opportunities to do many things and help them to obtain their rights. Therefore, this new life made many women tasted the freedom as many historians described it.

This chapter sheds light on the status of women in Britain during The First World War in all the aspects. Furthermore, it traces the crucial role of those women during this war. In addition, this chapter explains how the women in Britain adapted to the situation and what their reaction was. This chapter includes also some examples of famous British women during this war will be mentioned.

1. The Social Impacts of the First World War on British Women

It was remarkable that the First World War had great impact on women's lives in Britain due to the fact that this war had changed their status socially, politically, and economically. During the war, women were compelled to undertake onerous responsibilities. Hence, women had crucial roles in protecting their families and country.

The war forced a new independence and enterprise on women. Many became accustomed to having more responsibility within the home. The challenge to the myth of male work skills, resulting from women's war work, may have generally served to undermine masculine assumptions of authority (Farmer, 2011, p. 228).

1.1. The First World War and the Escaping of Women from the Style of Daily Domesticity

During the war, women undertook a variety of jobs previously done by men. Some historians claim that this increased women's self-confidence. It certainly gave some women more economic independence and a legitimate excuse for escaping from the confines of domesticity. However, it is possible to claim that the war's positive effects on women's status have been exaggerated because women rarely did skilled work and were usually paid much less than men. This only 'increased antagonism between the sexes', says DeGroot, 'and, needless to say, did nothing for gender equality'. The notion that the war revolutionized men's minds about the sort of work of which women were capable may well be a deception. Traditional views of women's role remained strong. Moreover, if most men continued to think women's place was at home, many women agreed. Indeed, the war may have strengthened the ideology of domesticity. Motherhood was increasingly presented as an honorable state service, akin to soldiering. Several

women's organizations developed this line of argument in support of family allowances and state subsidies for child-bearing mothers – money that would encourage women to stay at home. In addition, the horizons of many young women broadened after 1914 (Farmer, 2011).

1.2. Women and the Freedom

The liberation of women took other forms. They started to wear lighter clothing, shorter hair and skirts, began to smoke and drink openly, and to wear cosmetics. Married women wanted smaller families, and divorce became easier, rising from a yearly average of 800 in 1910 to 8000 in 1939. Undoubtedly, many men also moved away from Victorian values. Leading writers like D.H. Lawrence, Aldous Huxley, James Joyce and Virginia Woolf freely discussed sexual and other sensitive matters, which would have been impossible for earlier generations (McDowall, 1989, p. 163).

1.3. Women during the War: Misery and Gender Difference

For many women, the war brought heartache and loneliness rather than a great release. Constant anxiety over the fate of loved ones often culminated in the agony of bereavement. In the longer term women had to endure another of the war's legacies: a worsening of the gender imbalance. Among those aged 20–34, the female surplus rose from 463,000 in 1914 to 773,300 in 1921. Thanks to the war one woman in six could look forward to a lifelong spinsterhood (Farmer, 2011, p. 218).

1.4. Women and Sexual Freedom during World War One

The war may have led to free sexual relationships. Perhaps some young women were tempted to have a last fling with boyfriends before they went to the front. Some were convinced that this encouraged a rise in the illegitimacy rate (from 4.3 per cent in 1913 to 6.3 per cent in 1918). There were press outcries at the numbers of single women expecting 'war babies' in areas where large numbers of troops were stationed. But the rise in illegitimacy may have been simply a reflection of the obstacles presented by the war to the common practice whereby men agreed to marry women if they became pregnant. More worrying than the rise in illegitimacy was the increase in venereal disease, which affected something like one soldier in five. French co-operation in organizing brothels, with some rudimentary medical control, was not enlisted until 1916. Protective sheaths were not issued to the troops until 1917. Through wider distribution of sheaths more married couples probably became familiar with contraception during and immediately after the war. But Marie Stopes's book *Married Love* (1918), which popularized birth-control techniques, suggested in its title that it was concerned with marriage enrichment, not sexual pleasure for its own sake. Women perhaps came to benefit from the growing use of contraception: it rescued some wives from a non-stop succession of pregnancies. But otherwise the war did not much advance the cause of sexual liberation (Farmer, 2011).

According to Robert Roberts [he was an English teacher and writer], whose parents at the time ran a corner-shop in a working-class area, women at the end of that war 'were more alert, more worldly-wise'. They then discovered that their husbands, returned from the war, 'were far less the lords and masters of old, but more comrades to be lived with on something like level

terms'. According to the novelist Evadne Price, in her fictional autobiography based on the genuine reminiscences of a nurse who served on the battle front, the war destroyed old-style sexual reticence (Marwick, 1991, pp. 11-12).

Sport, especially football, was encouraged among the new female workforce, and many munitions factories established their own ladies' football teams. In 1918, knock-out competition the Munitionettes' Cup attracted 30 teams; matches drew crowds of tens of thousands of spectators and raised large sums of money for the war effort. Despite their popularity, in 1921 the FA banned women's football matches at their grounds, and this ban was only lifted in 1971. Teams such as the Cumbria Munitionettes from Lonsdale in Cambrian used the matches to raise money for the war effort and for wounded soldiers contribution (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 3).

Sport during the war in Britain helped the country economically and encouraged the woman socially in order to escaping from the daily routine of domesticity.

2. Women's Economic Role during the War

In 1914, Suffragette groups suspended their campaign for women's right to vote, demanding instead that they would be allowed to serve the country by undertaking work that would release men for military duty. Trade union opposition initially made this difficult because they feared that female labour would reduce wages for men. But as the labour shortage intensified and the principle of dilution was accepted, women began to find work. The number of females employed in munitions production rose from 82,859 in July 1914 to 947,000 by November 1918. Some 200,000 women entered government departments and 500,000 took over

clerical work in private offices while the number of females in the transport sector rose from 18,200 to 117,200. As a result, Munitions work offered more freedom and better remuneration. Work in munitions industries would also end when the war ended. In 1918, five-sixths of women were still doing what was considered to be ‘women’s work’. While the number of domestic servants declined by 400,000, most women were still employed as domestic servants. But, Women still earned substantially less than men doing the same work (Farmer, 2011).

The moralizing campaigns were designed to induce guilt in mothers who did paid work, many of whom, as we have seen, had little choice if they were to maintain themselves and their children above the poverty line. But, in this atmosphere, the reformists’ concerns also led to policy changes. The Maternity and Child Welfare Act passed in 1918 enabled local authorities to find maternity homes, infant welfare centers and crèches, and to provide salaried midwives and health visitors as well as milk and food for mothers and children. These provisions must have been welcomed by many mothers. However, the WCG and other women’s organizations argued that what mothers needed above all, in order to improve their health, was contraception. In spite of evidence of the appalling effects of too many births too close together on both women and children, the postwar clinics were not allowed to offer a contraceptive service. The limitations of the wartime improvements in the conditions of motherhood are suggested by the fact that the rate of maternal mortality remained stubbornly high throughout the interwar years (Summerfield, 2006).

2.1. Women Workers in the Factories

After the introduction of conscription in March 1916, the government encouraged women to take the place of male employees who were serving at the front. By 1918 nearly one million women were employed in engineering and munitions industries. Known as Munitionettes - these women became the poster girls for the war effort and were frequently photographed and filmed to emphasize the importance of their contribution to the war effort (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 3). In addition, Women were required to make a significant contribution during the First World War. As more men left for combat, women undertook 'men's work'. The government used propaganda films to encourage women to get involved, for instance, women worked in farms and factories (Anitha & Pearson, 2013).

Mcdowal (1989) mentioned that the war in 1914 changed everything. Britain would have been unable to continue the war without the women who took men 's places in the factories. By 1918, 29 percent of the total workforce of Britain was female (p. 163).

Many of the female workers at the vast shell filling factory in Chilwell in the suburbs of Nottingham lived in an industrial complex that was like a small city, with its own power station, 125 miles of railway track, 34 railway engines, giant laundries, a ballroom, a cinema, two purpose-built townships, and kitchens producing 14,000 meals and 13,000 loaves of bread a day and Long shifts were commonplace in the factories and there are reports of women passing out after working 12 hours continuously, without eating. They formed a third of the 80,000 strong workforce at The Royal Arsenal in Woolwich in London. Although employment was generally regarded as well paid, female workers did not receive the same wages and benefits as their male

counterparts. They often found themselves doing jobs that had been simplified into a series of unskilled tasks (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 3).

Work in the factories was hazardous. Employees handled explosives and noxious substances known to cause a range of medical disorders, from skin complaints to bone disintegration. Manufacturing mustard and other gases was particularly perilous; sickness rates were so high at HM Factory [National Filling Factory which is known HM Factory was established by the Ministry of Munitions in 1917] in Chittening Road in Bristol that workers were entitled to one week of holiday for every 20 days worked. In Gretna in the Scottish borders, Women working at HM Factory produced nearly a thousand tones of the explosive, cordite, per week. They used their bare hands to mix concentrated acid with cotton and solvent to make what became known as 'the devil's porridge'. Life in the factories wasn't just making ammunitions; these were communities of workers from all parts of the country. Many were young girls, away from home for the first time, and living together in hostels (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 3).



Figure 1: The war of munitions. A woman checking shell primers in 1917: Farmer, 2011, p. 207

Figure 1 shows the work of women in the shell factories in Britain during the World War One. It reflects how women were able to replace the man in the work place during the war period.

Those women who worked in the munitions factories were Known as ‘canaries’ because they had to handle TNT (the chemical compound trinitrotoluene that is used as an explosive agent in munitions) which caused their skin to turn yellow, these women risked their lives working with poisonous substances without adequate protective clothing or the required safety measures. Around 400 women died from overexposure to TNT during WWI (Anitha & Pearson, 2013).

2.2. Women Workers in Tank Production

Tank production was hot, heavy, dangerous work that now included women, working in heavy industry for the first time. They worked 12-hour shifts, taking over from each other to ensure 24-hour cover, even eating their sandwiches at their machines in the factory. Among the Tank girls in the war years: Florence Bonnet and William Foster(*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 4).

2.3. The Resistance of Women to Pass the Rent Restrictions Act

The wartime state was prepared to concede under duress. In 1915 the Glasgow Women’s Housing Association took direct action to prevent the eviction of a soldier’s family unable to pay the rent. Armed with peas meal flour, women mounted angry pickets, with street after street joining the rent strike. As discontent spread beyond Glasgow, the government introduced the Rent Restriction Act (Rowbotham, 2018).

A working class woman from the district of Gavan in Glasgow called Mary Barbour led some of the most successful resistance to rent increases. Barbour established tenants 'committees and organized rent strikes in which her supporters, known as 'Mrs. Barbour's Army', worked as a team. Women were posted as sentries to watch out for the Sheriff's officers coming to evict families who had fallen into rent arrears. A bell or the sound of a football rattle would then summon a larger crowd who would form a scrum to prevent officers gaining entry to houses, often pelting them with flour or rotting food. By November there were twenty thousand tenants on strike and on 17 November 1915, a crowd of thousands of women, along with engineers and ship workers, gathered at Glasgow Sheriff Court and the City Chambers in protest. A month after the November 1915 demonstration Parliament passed into law the Rent Restrictions Act, setting rents for the remainder of the war at pre-war levels (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 10).

When women appeared doing "men's jobs", skilled men were inclined to view them as interlopers, likely to enable employers to damage craft differentials. And this was indeed what happened in some factories. But the new recruits would also assert themselves in the workplace. In July 1918, male and female munitions workers in Coventry took strike action together. In that last year of the war, when women bus and train workers went on strike, the slogan, "Same work, same money" appeared. When the strikes spread from Hastings to Bristol, to Birmingham and South Wales, the authorities intervened with a five-shilling bonus, though not equal pay (Rowbotham, 2018, para. 08).

2.4. Women in the Land Army

The war years brought with them sweeping changes to the production of food. There was an army to feed, and many of the skilled farm workers had joined the army. By 1915 German U-boats were blockading the British coastline, preventing the import of food and threatening to starve the country, which prior to the war, had relied heavily on food from abroad. These stories show how everyone – from the Women’s Land Army to scouts and schoolboys –as one group, utilizing every corner of the land to ‘grow for Britain’ (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 5).

Well over 100,000 volunteered for the Women’s Land Army, ruffling the gender norms of rural Britain. Others enlisted in the Women’s Royal Naval Service, the Women’s Army Auxiliary Corps or the Women’s Royal Air Force as mechanics and drivers, cleaning, working in canteens or doing clerical work (Rowbotham, 2018, para. 04).

Women were a vital part of the drive to increase productivity on the land. From the start of the war women from all social classes responded to the need for help and volunteered to work on farms. As the war progressed, recruitment was formalized, and in 1917 the Women’s Land Army was established. Women were given four weeks training and went to farms around the country. By 1918, up to 260,000 women are reported to have worked as farm labourers, with over 16,000 working directly for the Land Army. They wore a distinctive uniform consisting of a tunic, breeches, boots and a felt cloche hat. They were expected to go wherever they were needed and they were paid 18 shillings a week for milking, taking care of livestock and general farm duties. This rose to 20 shillings when they passed an efficiency test (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 5).

The WLA, however, marked the first time that group of women came together in a national organization for farm work. The creation of the WLA was part of a broader effort to mobilize a domestic force of women workers, but with the specific task of replacing the male agricultural labourers who had enlisted or who had been conscripted into Britain's armed forces (White, 2014, p. 01).

Women also worked to harvest crops such as flax which was used for cloth coverings for aircraft construction. For ten weeks of the year, hundreds of pickers descended on farms in the area around Yeovil in Somerset for the flax season. Women workers camped in tents or slept in the open air, attracting the attention of local townsfolk who would walk or cycle past to catch a glimpse of them. Picking flax by hand was far from easy and often left the women with festering hand sores. In woodland areas including Flaxley Woods in the Forest of Dean in Gloucestershire, women took on the role of felling trees and cutting logs, and became known as 'Lumber Jills'. In figure 2, members of the Women's Forestry Corps grind an axe (World War One at home, n. d, chapter 5).



Figure 2: Members of the Women's Land Army feeding pigs and calves: White, 2014, p. 76

2. 5. Women Workers in the Hospital

Women in Britain during the First World War played a significant role to protect their country. They participated in the medical work in the military hospitals.

The Endell Street Military Hospital in Covent Garden in London was the only all-female run military hospital. Opened in May 1915 by suffragists Dr Flora Murray and Dr Louisa Garrett Anderson, the hospital became a specialist centre for head injuries and broken limbs, and even published clinical research. When it closed in August 1919, staff had treated 24,000 patients and performed more than 7,000 operations. The all-female staff proved what many had before doubted – that women could manage the medical and administrative needs of a hospital just as well as men. In 1917 both Murray and Garrett Anderson were recognized for their accomplishments, but career prospects for women in medicine after the war changed little (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 7).

2.6. Women Workers as Voluntary Aid Detachment (VADs)

Many troops were treated by VADs, short for Voluntary Aid Detachment, or as the troops fondly called them, 'Very Adaptable Dames' since they did almost every job. They needed to be adaptable, as the casualties were often complicated to nurse and it was very demanding work. An estimated 90,000 VADs attended to the wounded, with most coming from the middle and upper classes (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 7).

There were many famous women who worked as a VAD during the inter war period, Agatha Christie was one of those women. Crime novelist Agatha Christie worked as a VAD in the Red Cross Hospital in Torquay [*sic*] Town Hall in Devon. Her role included preparing and

dispensing medicines - thus giving her valuable insight into which drugs could be dangerous in the wrong doses. Her first novel, written in 1916, featured a poisoning, and over the course of her writing career she went on to pen the murder of a further 81 victims in this way (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 7).

2.7. Women's Recruitment in Different Jobs

During WWI (1914-1918), a large number of women were recruited into jobs vacated by men who had gone to fight in the war. This led to women working in areas of work that were formerly reserved for men, for example as railway guards and ticket collectors, buses and tram conductors, postal workers, police, firefighters and as bank 'tellers' and clerks. Some women also worked heavy or precision machinery in engineering, led cart horses on farms, and worked in the civil service and factories. However, they received lower wages for doing the same work, and thus began some of the earliest demands for equal pay (Anitha & Pearson, 2013).

The First World War saw a number of changes to rules and regulations of daily life, including the introduction of Britain's first female police officers. Women campaigners had pushed for the creation of a patrol to tackle widespread fears of prostitution and 'Khaki Fever' - young girls succumbing to the lure of men in uniform (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 9).

Two competing organizations were established. The moderate Voluntary Women Patrols were middle class churchgoers who patrolled the capital and saw themselves as aides to the existing police force. The more radical Women's Police Service was led by former suffragette, Margaret Damer Dawson. Volunteers trained at Little George Street in Westminster in London and by 1917 there were 2,000 women patrolling the country. The first female officer to be given

powers of arrest was Edith Smith who was sent to work in Grantham in Lincolnshire. Smith's report card gives a flavor of her duties: "Forty foolish girls warned, 20 prostitutes sent to other places outside Grantham, two fallen girls helped, five bad women cautioned". But she was highly unusual - the majority of female officers were not granted the power of arrest until 1923. Evelyn Miles was the first woman constable to join Birmingham City Police in 1917, at the age of 50 (*World War One at home*, n. d, chapter 9).

Former domestic servants became window cleaners, gas fitters and crane drivers. They moved into the munitions factories, where their faces turned yellow and their hair green from the chemicals. They braved explosions and poisonous substances to serve their country – and to earn higher pay (Rowbotham, 2018).

2.8. Urging Women to Study Home Economics

In 1915, the newly formed Women's Institutes were introduced to Britain from Canada. They urged women to study home economics and aimed to strengthen class harmony. A more radical approach to domestic dislocation was tried in east London. The socialist feminist, Sylvia Pankhurst, who denounced the First World War, put a cost-price restaurant and a mother-and-baby clinic in a former pub, which she renamed The Mother's Arms. The dangers of being a baby were stressed on all political fronts, an awareness that would lead to the formation of local authority maternity and child welfare committees (Rowbotham, 2018, para. 6).

3. The Political Impact of the First World War on Women of Britain

“The years following World War I brought a big change in politics that made Britain a fully democratic country for the first time” (Burns, 2010, p. 181). The contribution women made

during the war had an impact on attitudes to women. Politicians and the general public alike recognized that British women deserved more political rights ("Why women won greater political equality by 1928", n. d).

3.1. Women's Electoral Rights During and After the War

The war led to radical changes in the electoral system, with the electorate increasing from eight million to 21 million of the general population (Farmer, 2011, p. 226). In February 1918, the Representation of the People Act gave the vote to all men over 21 years of age and to women over 30 (Mason, 2018). This represented 8.5 million women - two thirds of the total population of women in the UK ("Why women won greater political equality by 1928", n. d). However, it was another ten years late, in 1928, before this was extended to women over 21 (Mason, 2018).

According to Ward (2001), Historians generally agreed that the deliberate exclusion of women under 30, those most likely to have worked in munitions factories or to have joined the VAD or the women's paramilitary forces, makes the argument that women were being rewarded for their contribution to the war effort untenable (p. 42).

Once women could vote, they felt that they had gained full and equal rights. But, there was still a long battle ahead for equal treatment and respect both at work and at home. The struggle for full women's rights is one of the most important events in the recent British history, and its effects continue to be felt (McDowall, 1989, p. 163).

3. 2. Women in Parliament

In 1918, 17 women stood as prospective members of parliament (MPs), only Countess Markievicz of Sinn Féin party won a seat in 1918 and she refused to take it (Farmer, 2011). A

very few women entered parliamentary politics for the first few decades it was open to them. The first woman to serve in the Commons was an immigrant from America, Nancy Astor (1879–1964). She was elected as a Conservative for Plymouth Sutton in a by-election in 1919 (Burns, 2010, p. 181). In 2001, 118 of MPs were women. But women face problems in being selected as parliamentary candidates and winning seats in the Commons (Oakland, 2002, p.77).

3. 3. Attitudes of the Suffrage Movements During the War

When World War One erupted, the whole suffrage movements immediately separated and even suspended some of their activities. As men left their jobs and went overseas to fight in the war, Suffragist and Suffragette leaders volunteered their members to take their place. They worked in munitions factories and weapons manufacturers. Many more British women worked as conductors on buses and trams, as police, as labourers on farms and at docks, in hospitals as nurses, in offices as secretaries and assistants, as well as in the Civil Service ("Why women won greater political equality by 1928", n. d).

During World War One, the National Union of Women's Suffrage Societies (NUWSS) stopped its political campaign and offered its full cooperation to the government ("Domestic impact of World War One - society and culture", n. d). The war functioned for the NUWSS as a crisis point, dividing and regrouping its most prominent members according to the structure of their political beliefs for example, Mrs. Fawcett was a stalwart Liberal and believed that although war was not to be desired, women's most positive contribution should be to the relief of its effects (Ouditt, 2005).

Meanwhile, the WSPU had purged itself of dissident members such as Charlotte Despard, Sylvia Pankhurst and Emmeline Pethick Lawrence who had left to form, respectively, the Women's Freedom League (1907), the East London Federation of Suffragettes (1913) and the United Suffragists (1914), which all opposed the war (Ouditt, 2005, p. 136). Emmeline Pankhurst remarked that there was no point in continuing the fight for the vote when there might be no country in which they could vote ("Why women won greater political equality by 1928", n. d).

Moreover, Noakes (2006) stated that *The Times* noted on 11 August 1914 that the Women's National Liberal Association and the Women's Freedom League were all abandoning their political campaigns and instead 'devoting themselves to helping those who suffer from the war' (p. 46).

As a result of the suffrage movement's suspension of its campaign, Numerous voluntary organizations appeared in the first months of war, including The Women's Emergency Corps, The British Women's Patriotic League, Harvest Work for Women and the Women's Suffrage National Aid Corps, the Association of Infant Consultations and Schools for Mothers, and the Women's Co-operative Guild (Noakes, 2006).

By the end of the 1920s, feminism as a political and social movement no longer existed. This was due to the impact of the war on cultural perceptions and gender which changed feminists' understandings of masculinity and femininity (Kent, 2014, p. 232).

3. 4. Different Views on the Impact of the Great War on Female Suffrage

Historians took different views on how much the war work had an impact on the decision to grant women limited enfranchisement in 1918.

- Historian Gifford Lewis believes that “The highly skilled and dangerous work done by women during the war was probably the greatest factor in the granting of the vote to women.” (“Why women won greater political equality by 1928”, n. d).
- Historians including Arthur Marwick have argued that the Great War only accelerated a process that had started well before 1914 (“Why women won greater political equality by 1928”, n. d).
- Dr Martin Pugh has argued that women now actually got less than what they would have done if there had been no war. While most feminist writers have preferred to stress the significance of the women's suffrage movement, they do usually recognize that women's participation in the war effort did play a part in changing the opinions of influential men who had hitherto been opposed to votes for women (Marwick, 1991, p. 29).
- According to the French feminist Simone de Beauvoir, the winning of the vote by British women 'was in large part due to the services they rendered during the war' (Marwick, 1991, p.11).
- A 1919 article, looking back on the suffrage movement's contribution to the war effort described the transition in the following terms:

I watched the Suffrage movement through its later phases of struggle, desperation and success . . . the fight was largely a soldier's battle. What devotion was shown and what

courage! Delicate women surrendered their health, rich ones their money. Timid ones their reserve and dislikes . . . when the time came, the women's army was there, fit and mobilized, to answer the call. (Noakes, 2006, pp.46-47)

- In the newspaper world, The Times, the Observer and the Daily Mail swung round. J. L. Garvin pronounced a formal recantation:

Time was when I thought that men alone maintained the State. Now I know that men alone never could have maintained it, and that henceforth the modern State must be dependent on men and women alike for the progressive strength and vitality of its whole organization. (Marwick, 1991, p. 139)

4. The Military Contribution of British Women to the War Effort

British women were more than just handmaidens and patriotic mothers. During World War One, the range of roles open to women was immense: they manned factories, invested in war bonds, harvested crops, and cared for troops on leave. They also enlisted in the armed forces (Bourke, 2011).

Over 750,000 British soldiers had died, which amounted to roughly 9% of the population, which became known as the 'lost generation' of British soldiers (Curry, 2018). By 1917 the Army was running short of men. The War Office realized that some front line jobs which did not involve fighting were being done by men. They decided that women could do these jobs instead. At first, some women saw the front line of war as an adventure. They quickly realised the reality was harder and sadder than the stories they had read. But women on front line were very brave and they learnt new skills and worked in various dangerous jobs which would have been

unthinkable before the war ("What did women do on the front line in World War One?", n. d). In World War One, approximately 80,000 women served in the three British women's forces as non-combatants (Bourke, 2011).

One significant women's role in the war was in nursing. Although it had long been an occupation associated with women, the World War One obliged a greater number of women to depart from their peacetime domesticity (Curry, 2018).

Some nursing organizations existed in 1914, such as the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry (FANY) and the Voluntary Aid Detachments (VADs) (History.com, 2009). The rules of these organizations were strict: no make-up, no long nails, always look smart, always carry scissors, safety pins and a pencil. VAD nurses often washed and cleaned as well as nursing their patients ("What did women do on the front line in World War One?", n. d).

Women were not allowed to fight as soldiers in World War One. So they found other ways to help on the front line. Conditions were dangerous for women travelling to the war zones. They were at risk from enemy fire. However, Englishwoman Flora Sandes was the only British woman to officially serve as a soldier in World War One. Later, she became a Sergeant Major ("What did women do on the front line in World War One?", n. d). Flora insisted on acting as a soldier, and being treated as such; therefore, like male combatants, she cared for the wounded, but her martial valour during World War One was recognized in June 1919 when a special Serbian Act of Parliament made her the first woman to be commissioned in the Serbian Army (Bourke, 2011).

Farmer (2011) mentioned that:

fighting remained an almost entirely male activity. It was with reluctance that the service ministries sanctioned the use of female personnel. Nevertheless, in 1917 volunteer bodies were consolidated into the Women's Auxiliary Army Corp (WAAC), followed by the Women's Royal Naval Service (WRNS) and later the Women's Royal Air Force (WRAF); in total over 100,000 women. Serving as typists, drivers, telephonists, clerks and cooks, they released more men for combatant duty. Some 40,000 women worked as nurses or female orderlies in Britain and in field hospitals in France. (p. 183)

In addition, British women were drafted into the Women's Army Auxiliary Corp (WAAC) during the war. Branches of the navy and RAF, the Women's Royal Naval Service and the Women's Royal Air Force, were established in November 1917 and April 1918 respectively (Curry, 2018).

Women, of course, were not invited to join the army and scarcely invited to help it in the field. Many of the more wealthy and leisured women defiantly established their own semi-military organizations, but even the suffragist doctor Elsie Inglis was initially advised by the Royal Army Medical Corps to 'go home and sit still' (Lawrence 1971:98). The loudest and most persuasive call to women was to come from the Red Cross and Order of St John via the VAD organization. In this, women could make their contribution in an acceptable role: as nurses, offering voluntary aid to the sick and wounded under the auspices of the Geneva Convention and at a safe distance from the front line. This position was seen by many as women's nearest equivalent to that of the fighting male (Ouditt, 2005).

Conclusion

After reading all those pieces of information about women's lives in Britain during the First World War, it is difficult to understand and interpret how they were able to adapt to this complicated life because the war years were as a turning point of the lives of those women. Moreover, the war period had great impacts on their positions and roles in the society. The interwar time made a clear and observable changes in the live of any female in the British society.

From this chapter which has presented different aspects from the daily lives of those women with focusing on some social and political issues and rights, there is a sign that the British women during the war had an opportunity to be an active member in the society, and they might obtain some rights which were neglected before the war. As a result, many women tasted the freedom which was their dream. But, they did not know the reasons behind this liberation because it had probably been the only solutions and practices for the war duration.

Finally, this chapter shows that the war had a significant role to represent the value of many women and their participation in protecting their countries. Women in Britain were a model of patience and courage and they were able to replace man in many fields.

**Chapter Three: The British Women between the
Dream of Liberation and the War Obligation**

Chapter Three: The British Women between the Dream of Liberation and the War Obligation

Introduction

Generally speaking, women's lives in Britain during the First World War were nearly different at all levels compared to the period before the war. Therefore, many people believed that the war years brought freedom and some rights to many female and paved the way to them to open the door of women's liberation and to be independent in their lives without any stress from their societies and their traditional rules which obliged the British woman to follow them (traditional rules). During this war, women had an opportunity to go outside their houses and shared work places with men whereby women became able to gain more rights. Hence, it was widely felt that the war brought freedom to British women.

On the other hand, when looking at all these changes and their effects on British women, it will be clear that all this was only a solution for filling the gaps left by men who went to fight during the war and it has no relation with the freedom of female. This chapter is built on this idea and focus on this specific point.

In order to analyse the later point and get full understanding about it, this chapter puts emphasis on some decisions, acts and resolutions the British government had passed during the interwar period concerning this issue. In addition, some statistics will be used to show the truth of this new status of women during the war period.

Finally, the current chapter presents a brief view about women's position in the aftermath of the war in order to know the limitation of this status and its continuity.

1. The Acts of Government: Improvement or Limitation

During the war years, the government passed some acts to create new principles about some issues concerning women's work and their status during and after the war. These are some examples of those acts:

1.1. The Munitions Act of June 1915

This Act was passed in 1915, Summerfield (2006) explained the reason for passing this Act and its purpose :

In the First World War, the trade union view of women as an unwanted rival workforce, whose proper place was in “women’s work” or at home, gave rise to industrial unrest when employers started to take on women, and it led to government intervention in capital-labour relations in order to limit the damage to the war effort. In the crisis year of 1915 the government secured two agreements with employers and with trade unions, which were embodied in a Munitions Act of June 1915. The Act was designed to speed up the production of munitions by removing the right to strike, and by obtaining a promise from the unions that they would not prevent women doing some parts of a skilled man’s job, in return for a guarantee that women fully replacing skilled men would receive the men’s rate. This heralded increasingly rapid “dilution” and “substitution”, terms of immense significance for women workers. Dilution meant the employment of less-skilled workers on skilled work which had been simplified by the breaking down and

mechanization of processes. Substitution meant the direct replacement of men by women on skilled work. (p. 272)

1.2. The Rent Restriction Act of 1915

The 1915 Glasgow rent strike was triggered by outrage over evicted service wives. It struck a chord with women all over the country and led directly to the introduction of the Rent Restriction Act of 1915, controlling increases on rents of under £30 a year. This was wartime rather than a permanent measure, repeated at the start of the Second World War, but it eased a difficult situation for women, who were responsible traditionally for paying for housing (Summerfield, 2006, p. 263).

By November 1915, some twenty thousand tenants were on rent strike in Glasgow alone. The rent strike spread from Glasgow to other cities throughout Britain. The authorities tried to crush the movement using the courts. Eighteen Glasgow tenants were taken to court for non-payment of rent. The intention was clearly to set an example with harsh prison sentences, but it backfired. On November 17, 1915, thousands of women marched shoulder to shoulder with engineering and shipyard workers to the Glasgow Sheriff's Court and the City Chambers. The Sheriff was terrified and contacted the central government, warning that Glasgow was on the point of revolution (Muñoz, 2014).

An immediate response came from the Minister of Munitions, Lloyd George: "Stop the trial immediately. We are passing a law to limit rent increases." Lloyd George instructed the Glasgow Sheriff Court to release the tenants promising that he would take action. Ten days later,

Parliament passed the Rent Restrictions Act, setting rents for the remainder of the war at pre-war levels. The women and working class of Glasgow had won a spectacular victory (Muñoz, 2014).

1.3. The Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act in 1916

After passing the Munitions Act of June 1915, the unions were assured that the changes were for the duration of the war only, and that they would be reversed at its end, a point reinforced by the passing of the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act in 1916. Women could not be members of craft unions, such as the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, and were not invited to participate in the negotiations: these arrangements that were so crucial to their chances of equality in the workplace were made exclusively by the government, employers and male trade unionists (Summerfield, 2006).

1.4. The Maternity and Child Welfare Act In 1918

In 1918 an Education Act was passed, and a Maternity and Child Welfare Act; in 1919 a major Housing Act, and an Act establishing a Ministry of Health. There were Unemployment Insurance Acts in 1920 and 1921 (Marwick, 1991, p. 12).

Partly in response to the falling birth rate, but more generally because the saving of infant lives seemed necessary to replace those who had died in battle, great efforts were made by government and private agencies to provide support for expectant mothers and children. In 1914, there were 400 Infant Welfare Centres [*sic*] and Schools for Mothers. By 1918, there were more than 1000. The Local Government Board gave financial incentives to local authorities to improve midwifery, health visiting and other welfare services. The 1918 Maternity and Child Welfare Act consolidated and extended many of the wartime measures (Farmer, 2011, p. 219).

“The Maternity and Child Welfare Act may have reinforced the traditional role of women but at least, through local authority action, it did much to improve their lot within that role. Acts of parliament do not in themselves create paradise, and many of these ones were weakened as government economies began to take effect. To me, their significance lies in the ways in which they set new standards of expectation in social welfare” (Marwick, 1991, p. 33).

In this context, Summerfield (2006) mentioned that :

Before the First World War, attention focused on whether the quality of the population was adequate for an imperial power. Members of the eugenics movement argued that Britain was being overpopulated with debased stock, as a result in part of inadequate working-class mothering. Two kinds of solution were advocated: one was reform of the physical conditions in which women had children, and the other involved the education of working-class women, who were assumed to be ignorant and insanitary (...). The other "solution", opposition to mothers who did paid work, was more popular with moralists and conservatives. At the hysterical extreme [*sic*] of this position, a journalist, Margaret Hamilton wrote in July 1915 that the typical woman war worker was “the woman who, driven from her home is forced to work in the factories and the workshops while her baby lies dead”, and Dr C.W. Sale stated in 1918 that working women committed “a sin against the laws of life”. National Baby Weeks were organized in 1917 and 1918, to educate women in devotion to motherhood and teach them how to “save every savable child” . (p. 264)

Even if there was no concerted state policy to meet the reservations that women evidently felt about it, motherhood was constructed powerfully as the norm for women at the end of each war. In the last years of the First World War, discussion of motherhood was framed in terms of national need. Basil Worsfold spoke for many in a book published in 1919“it cannot be emphasized too strongly that the service which the State most requires from the generality of women is motherhood and the maintenance of the family in purity and happiness” (Summerfield, 2006).

2. Women and Discrimination: Class Division, Paid Employment and Lower Pay

The First World War brought many changes in the lives of British women. It is often represented as having had a wholly positive impact, opening up new opportunities in the world of work and strengthening their case for the right to vote. The reality is more complex. But, not all of the opportunities the war provided to women were entirely positive or long lasting (Mason, 2018).

It was not the same for all women; however, in wartime as in peace time class distinctions were the decisive factor. It was rare for middle and upper class women to work and when they did it was mainly in lighter occupations. The expectations about them consisted in getting married, then look after their children and to look after the home, or rather supervise their servants who did all the work (Muñoz, 2014).

The class basis was the reason for the dismissal from work. The better-off women often kept their jobs, while women from poor families were dismissed out of hand. Winston Churchill,

the Minister of Munitions, congratulated the munitions firms for acting with “commendable promptitude in immediately dismissing several thousands of their women workers”, words which “recoiled on my head and caused a great deal of unfavourable comment”. In order to avoid further “unfavourable comment”, Mr. Churchill advised a slight delay in further layoffs (Muñoz, 2014).

During the 1920s and as a result of the death of many British men during the First World War, newspaper headlines talked of 'surplus' women who would never find husbands. While many middle class women did remain unmarried due to the lack of available men in the relatively narrow social sphere in which they moved, some women in this period remained single by choice or by financial necessity. Professions such as teaching and medicine were opening up to women, but only if they remained unmarried (Mason, 2018).

2.1. The Impact of the War on Women’s Employment

One contemporary commentator, A.W. Kirkaldy, estimated that 1.6 million more women were employed in Britain in 1918 than in 1914, the total rising from 3.2 million to 4.8 million (Bockett, 2007, p. 460).

The Great War provided new employment opportunities for women (“Women and the First World War”, n. d). Therefore, women’s employment rates increased during WWI. Between 1914 and 1918, an estimated two million women replaced men in employment, resulting in an increase in the proportion of women in total employment from 24 per cent in July 1914 to 37 per cent by November 1918 (Bourke, 2011, para.1).

Table 1: Employed females in the UK during the First World War

Occupation	Total females employed in July 1914	Females as % of total workforce in 1914	Additional number employed by 1918	Females as % of total workforce in 1918
Industries	2,176,500	26	538,000	36
Government Establishments	2,000	3	197,000	44
Gas, Water & Electricity	600	1	4,000	9
Agriculture	80,000	9	9,000	13
Transport	17,000	2	78,000	10
Tramways	1,200	2	18,000	34
Finance & Banking	9,500	5	63,000	40
Commerce	496,000	29	354,000	53
Professions	50,500	28	57,000	61
Hotels, Cinemas, etc.	181,000	48	25,000	64
Civil service, post office	60,500	24	39,500	52
Civil service , others	5,500	9	99,500	57
Other services under local authorities	196,200	34	31,000	47
Total	3,276,000	24	1,533,000	37

Source: (Crew, 1989, p. 29)

As table 1 shows, nearly 50% more women were employed by 1918 than had been employed in July 1914. The numbers increased most significantly where war conditions were most obvious, though industry was the greatest attraction. In manufacturing industry, around 2,176,000 women were employed in July in 1914, an additional 538,000 had joined by April 1918. Where did they come from? By April 1918 about 83,000 fewer were engaged on ‘ women’s work ’ in clothing trades. In the paper trades, around 24,500 had moved out. An investigation of 444,000 women in industry in early 1917 showed that 30% had been in the same occupation before the war, 22% had not been employed and 17% had been in domestic service. Thus 31% had come from other industries. Andrews suggested that those who changed

occupations tended to be the more skilled workers who, in fact, went to less skilled work in munitions. The 22% who had not been employed consisted of married women who had worked before marriage, and a small number of upper and middle class women (as cited in Crew, 1989, p. 29).

2.1.1. Industry

Table 2: Changes in female employment within industry during the war

Trade	Number of Females in July 1914	Number of Females in July 1918	% Female of Total in July 1914	% Female of Total in July 1918	Number of Females Replacing Males in 1918
Metal	170,000	594,000	9	25	195,000
Chemical	40,000	104,000	20	37	35,000
Textile	863,000	827,000	58	67	64,000
Clothing	612,000	568,000	68	76	43,000
FDT	196,000	235,000	35	49	60,000
Penny&Pence	147,500	141,500	36	48	21,000
Wood	44,000	79,000	15	32	23,000
China	32,000				
Leather	21,100	197,100	4	10	62,000
Other	49,000				
Govt.est.	2,000	225,000	3	47	197,000
Total	2,178,600	2,970,600	26	37	704,000

Source : (Bean, 2015, p. 15)

Table 2 shows both the breakdown of the increases in numbers in different sectors within industry, and the increases in the share of female labor within the major industrial sectors – the proportion female increased from 9 to 25% in the metal trades, from 3 to 47% in government

factories, from 20 to 39% in the chemical industry, and from 26 to 37% in industry overall (Bean, 2015).

However, it might be noted that the increases in some areas were attained as a result of decreases elsewhere as the better pay available in war industries lured women from traditional and ‘ invisible ’ employment (Bockett, 2007).

2.1.2. Transport

One of the areas of employment where new opportunities opened up for women was in transport. Women began working as bus conductresses, ticket collectors, porters, carriage cleaners and bus drivers. During the war the number of women working on the railways rose from 9,000 to 50,000 (Mason, 2018).

Table 3: Changes in female employment within transport during the war

Occupation :	July 1914	July 1918
Booking clerks	192	3,612
Telegraph & Telephone operators	2,800	20,995
Ticket collectors	0	1,972
Carriage cleaners	214	4,603
Engine cleaners	0	3,065
Porters and checkers	3	9,980
Workshop laborers	43	2,547
Other laborers	420	580
Cooks, waitresses, attendants	1,239	3,641
Signals, gate-keepers, guards and conductors	437	1,292
Munitions, machinists, mechanics	44	1,082
Painters, cleaners	698	1,177
Total (including unspecified occupations)	12,432	65,887

Source : (Bean, 2015, p. 16)

The transportation sector employed relatively few females before the war, so the proportional increase of female labor into work in that sector was among the largest.

Table 3 shows the especially large increase in women working as telegraph and telephone operators, and also the entry of female workers into jobs they appear to have been excluded from entirely before the war, as ticket collectors, engine cleaners and porters and ticket checkers (Bean, 2015, p. 5).

2.2. The Struggle for Wage's Equality and the Impact of the War on the Gender Wage Gap

Although women did the same work as men, women did not receive the same wages. We have already seen the kind of things women were condemned to adopt with: long hours, low pay and appalling and dangerous conditions. They provided a huge reservoir of cheap exploited labour for the employers. Women's pay increased during the war, but women in industry still remained second class citizens (Muñoz, 2014).

For women with children who wanted – or needed – to take on paid work, childcare could be a problem. The pressing need for women to work in munitions did prompt the government to provide some funds towards the cost of day nurseries for munitions workers, and by 1917 there were more than 100 day nurseries across the country. However, there was no provision for women working in any other form of employment and most had to rely on friends and family to help care for their children while they were at work (Mason, 2018).

Women in paid employment were not a new phenomenon in 1914. They constituted substantial part of the industrial workforce even before the First World War, although they were mainly concentrated in textile manufacture. After 1915, when the need for shells intensified,

women were brought into munitions manufacturing in large numbers. By 1918 almost a million women were employed in some aspect of munitions work (Mason, 2018).

2.3. Women Reaction against Wage Discrimination

Women did not accept wage discrimination passively. Even before the end of the War, many refused to accept lower pay. The women workers on London buses and trams went on strike in 1918, demanding the same increase in pay (war bonus) as men. The strike spread to other towns in the South East and to the London Underground. This was the first equal pay strike in Britain. It was initiated and led by women and was ultimately successful (Muñoz, 2014).

At this time, Lloyd George was increasingly worried by the effects of the Russian Revolution among British workers. Following these strikes, a Committee was established by the War Cabinet in 1917 to examine the question of women's wages. It released its final report after the war ended. This report endorsed the principle of equal pay for equal work. But as is always the case with parliamentary reports and Commissions of Investigation, this was not worth the paper it was printed on. The unions received guarantees that where women were doing the same work as skilled men they would be paid the same rate. But it was made clear that these changes were for the duration of the War only and would be reversed when the war ended and the soldiers came back. Moreover, those who drafted the legislation fully expected that due to their "lesser strength and special health problems", women's output would not be equal to that of men. Equal pay remained a fiction (Muñoz, 2014).

The war period did bring a temporary change in the UK, in that those men and women who participated in wartime works found their wages fixed, increased by regulation (Crew, 1989,

p. 31). It had certainly not meant equal pay which government and unions alike had resisted. Moreover, it was common to pay women on time-rates rather than the piece-rates to which equality had been applied by the regulation. Only in munitions work had women's pay kept pace with inflation but it was still less than men's. On average, women's wage in Britain rose from 13s.6d a week in 1914 to 35s.0d by 1918, but this only represented an increase from about half men's earnings to about two-thirds (Bockett, 2007, p. 462). However, in many trades the general pattern seemed to be that women's wages rose substantially only when they took over men's jobs, for example in dyeing trade, or in the tobacco trade (Crew, 1989).

Before reaching any conclusion about real wages, the increase in cost of living must be taken into account. Within days of the outbreak of war, bread had risen from 5.5d to 8d or more. Overall food prices increased 32% between July 1914 and June 1915. These trends continued for the rest of the war (Crew, 1989, p. 33).

Table 4 : Average weekly male and female earnings before and after the Great War

Year	Men & Boys	Women & Girls	Women/Men
1906	27.0s	11.8s	0.44
1924	57.6s	27.5s	0.48
1935	55.7s	26.9s	0.48

Source :(Bean, 2015, p. 19)

Table 4 reproduces data provided by Bowley (1947) from the Board of Trade enquiries into earnings and hours from 1906, 1924 and 1935 which show that the average ratio of male to female earnings (in all manual occupations except distributive and domestic service) was 0.44 in 1906, increasing to 0.48 by 1924. Concluded from this that although

female workers did make some absolute and relative earnings gains, “the reduction in gender inequality was fairly modest across the First World War (a narrowing of 4 percentage points in the pay ratio between 1906 and 1924 about 10 per cent), though there was some variance around this average figure” including in the metal industries, where the reduction was greater – 7 percentage points, about 18 per cent. Since these Board of Trade enquiries from 1906 and 1924 are most likely the best available source of data on wages from before and after the First World War, it may not be possible to say much more about the impact of the war on the gender wage gap. However, it does appear that at least in some sectors the gender wage gap was narrower during the war than these aggregate averages from before and after. (Bean, 2015, pp. 9-10)

3. Forcing Women to loss their Wartime Jobs and Return into Trades

The government assumed that when women lost their wartime jobs they would return quietly to women’s trades or stay at home, but nearly half a million had registered as unemployed by March 1919. They were not prepared to surrender their claim for work similar in terms of pay and conditions to their war work. Determined to restore conventional gender divisions, the government, the press and the labour exchanges mounted a campaign to force women back into trades such as domestic service, laundry work and dressmaking. Women who refused such work and continued to claim unemployment benefit were lambasted in the press as “slackers with state pay” trying to take the bread out of the mouths of ex-servicemen, when only a year previously they had been celebrated as heroines. In the second half of 1919, Employment Exchanges cut women’s benefit if they refused to take domestic or laundry work. These

pressures were effective. By November 1919, the number of women registered as unemployed had dropped to only 29,000.94 (Summerfield, 2006).

After the First World War the numbers of women workers, particularly in industry and trade, declined to practically pre-war levels. Women were the first to be dismissed from work in order to give the jobs to the returning soldiers from the front. This female employment had been regarded as temporary. This put women in a position of deep disadvantage: they now faced a return to being domestic servants or to be pushed into other underpaid employment. In addition, many married women had become war widows and were wholly responsible for the upkeep of their families. To make matters worse, during the 1920s and 30s the British economy was plunged into a deep recession leading to very high levels of unemployment (Muñoz, 2014).

At the end of each war, women were reminded forcibly that they were employed in "men's work" on a temporary basis. Following the Armistice in November 1918, women munition workers were mostly laid off, although some women in general engineering and aircraft work managed to stay on for a few months. In other industries, such as the leather trade, sawmills and brewing, they found their way into jobs formerly regarded as boys' (but not men's) work. More stayed in offices and shops, in work that was becoming identified as women's work (Summerfield, 2006, p. 275).

4. The Myth of Women's Liberation after the War: Reality or the War

Obligation

As the decade came to an end, much of what women had done in the war faded from immediate memory. In the years to come, unemployment, humiliating poverty, the rise of

fascism and another war were to muffle the postwar dreams of freedom, fulfillment and equality for women (Rowbotham, 2018).

The increase in women's employment was not securely built. By 1917, one woman in every three in employment had replaced a male worker. Under industrial agreements, these jobs would revert to men once the war was over. Work in munitions industries would also end when the war ended. Male attitudes to women workers were often negative. To unskilled men, women were an immediate and long-term threat. While the war lasted, women's ability to do men's work meant that more men were likely to be conscripted. In the longer term, women threatened wages (Farmer, 2011).

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the changes caused by World War One and their impact on the status of women; these changes showed the overriding need for women in the wartime. In fact, a woman had to help her family and country during that severe condition. Thus, many women achieved freedom because they had the opportunity to work outside their homes and escape from their daily routines. In addition to many acts which had been passed by the government as an enhancement and encouragement for the British women, the war brought to them greater rights that they never had before.

It can be concluded from this chapter that women's status in Britain during the First World War was mostly obligation rather than liberation.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

The World War One had a great impact upon British society it brought fear, grief and sorrow to men, women and children. The Great War led to material and human losses in Britain, so that the need for women's help became urgent. This thesis explains the effect of WW1 on women's life in Britain and how their status changed throughout the war years.

By the outbreak of WW1, the majority of men left their ordinary jobs and went to fight. Thus, women were conscripted to fill the empty jobs left behind by males. British women contribution to war effort had an effect on their lives after the war as they won the right to vote in addition to some other rights that they never had before. Moreover, the attitudes of the general public towards women had positively changed.

The work is divided into three chapters. The first has focused on women's lives in Britain before the war . In the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century, women were living under the men's authority and their role was only in the house. However, many working class women worked in either factories or domestic service in order to help their families although they got a lower pay. This chapter reveals that women suffered a lot because most of their were neglected. Next, the second chapter explains primarily the British women involvement in the war effort which brought a new life and freedom to them during the war period as they handled more jobs. They worked in munitions factories, hospitals, farms as well as in transportation because women were needed to do such tasks that kept the economy running at home. Therefore, numerous historians claim that the winning of the vote and the other social and political rights by women was due to the services they rendered during WW. After discussing all data in this

chapter, it is clear that World War One had changed women's lives and provided them with some social, political and economic rights which made them able to enjoy the freedom during the war years. Finally, the third chapter provides findings and statistics which explores the status of women during and after the war and highlights the changes that happened in that period. Some new acts were passed in the war period that served the women in Britain such as, the Maternity and Child Welfare Act and the Rent Restriction Act. Furthermore, the women's wages increased during the war and many available jobs opened to them. However, when the war came to an end, women lost their wartime jobs and stayed at home. The main purpose from the last chapter is to understand the reality of women's status during the war either it was a sign of liberation for those women or only as a solution for the war duration.

After analyzing and discussing the gathered data, the findings show that women had obtained some rights during the Great War which made them feel free in that period. But, in reality, the reason behind this liberation was not the liberation in itself, but it was the war obligation because when the war ended, all what women's lived in that period had ended as well.

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الملخص

كان للحرب العالمية الأولى (1914-1918) تأثير كبير على الرجال والنساء على حد سواء حيث يظهر ذلك جليا في عدة مجالات مرتبطة بحياة الإنسان وممتلكاته و علاقاتها الاجتماعية، ومواقفه السياسية وحتى وضعها الاقتصادي. ترتبط هذه الدراسة بالبحث في تأثير الحرب العالمية الأولى على المرأة البريطانية وذلك بالتركيز على مختلف التغيرات الاجتماعية والسياسية والاقتصادية التي طرأت على حياة النساء في تلك الفترة بسبب الحرب وذلك أن المرأة البريطانية قد شغلت عدة مناصب والتي كانت حكرا على الرجال فقط قبل الحرب وكذلك مشاركتها البارزة خلال الحرب انطلاقا من حقيقة أن الحرب العظمى قد أثرت على حياة المرأة في عدة مجالات فان دراستنا هذه تهدف إلى دراسة مختلف التغيرات الملحوظة التي كان لها تأثير كبير على حياة المرأة وهذا ما دفع كثير من الناس إلى الاعتقاد بأن الحرب قد فتحت أبواب الحرية على مصراعيها أمام المرأة البريطانية وذلك من خلال حصولها على بعض من حقوقها التي لم تتمتع بها قبل 1914. برزت من جهة أخرى عدة آراء تفيد بأن وضع المرأة في تلك الفترة لا يعني حصولها على الحرية التي كانت تتوق إليها، بل إن الحرب لم تقدم لها أي شيء ذلك أن المكانة الذي حازت عليها المرأة لم تستمر بعد ذلك، وأن السبب وراء ذلك التطور هو الحاجة الملحة إلى تعويض المرأة للرجل في عدة أعمال وفي مختلف المجالات خلال فترة الحرب. اعتمدنا في سبيل انجاز هذا البحث المنهج النوعي/الكيفي من خلال جمع المعلومات المتعلقة بموضوع البحث، كما أننا وجدنا في المنهج الوصفي التحليلي أداة مهمة للوقوف على بعض الحثيات والأحداث المهمة وكذا اختبار صحة الفرضيات. إن النتائج التي توصلنا إليها من خلال البحث تقضي إلى أن الحرب العالمية الأولى لم تحقق الحرية للنساء في بريطانيا ذلك أن المرأة كانت مجبرة على التعايش مع تلك الظروف. يمكن لهذه الدراسة أن تفسح المجال لعدة أبحاث وخاصة للباحثين المهتمين بدراسة مكانة المرأة ووضعها القانوني خلال الحرب العالمية الأولى.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الإجماع، الحرب العالمية الأولى، التحرر، الحياة، المرأة البريطانية، الحقوق.