Vocations for Women

Education and Opportunity for Women
at the Harris Institute, Preston,
during the First World War

by

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the neglected area of women's post-compulsory education during the First World War by studying the community of women who took evening classes at the Harris Institute, Preston. The history of women on the Home Front continues to receive, rightly, much attention, but up to now has tended to focus on opportunities for women's work, particularly in munitions. The current literature ignores the many women who entered clerical work during the war, and the role of vocational training has not been looked at. Yet learning skills for work equipped women to gain employment, especially in clerical and technical roles as opportunities arose in wartime.

The Harris Institute class registers for the period 1914 to 1918 facilitate a study into women on the Home Front through their education and occupations and draws attention to the variety of women's experience during the war. Some were employed and taking classes to enhance their skills, others were taking classes to train for different occupations. Some were not employed but were taking vocational classes, and still others were pursuing classes for leisure.

This dissertation argues that by attending the Harris Institute, women were displaying agency in their education and leisure time, and were planning future careers. This study confirms the importance of post-compulsory vocational training to women during the war and its inter-relationship with clerical work. Furthermore, it argues that their education was liberating, even if the benefits were temporary, and contributes to the history of women's education.

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I would like to express my sincere gratitude to my supervisor, Dr Keith Vernon, for his expertise, invaluable advice, continuous support and patience throughout the writing of this dissertation. I would also like to thank Dr Jack Southern for his helpful comments and suggestions. Thanks to Dr David Hunt for his encouragement, and to Chris Simms of the Royal Literary Fund for writing tips. Thanks to my family who have encouraged and supported me, and given me the benefit of their undergraduate experience. I am grateful to Helen for her encouragement and the benefit of her recent postgraduate experience. This work is dedicated to Mavis: her parents both attended the Harris Institute during the First World War, and while they do not appear in the writing, they are part of the story.

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

CHAPTER THREE

GLOSSARY OF ABBREVIATIONS AND LIST OF SYMBOLS

ABBREVIATIONS

HI	Harris Institute
HMI	His Majesty's Inspector
London School Board	LSB
UCLAN	University of Central Lancashire

SYMBOLS

Figures 1.1, 1.2, 1.3, and 1.4.

Purple circles mark the homes of the students.

Red circle marks the location of the Harris Institute.

Figure 2.1.

Blue circles mark the homes of the students.

Brown circles with factory symbol show location of industry.

Green circles with stars show where the mills were located.

Red circle marks the location of the Harris Institute.

Figure 3.1.

Red circles mark the homes of the students.

Brown circles with factory symbol show location of industry.

Green circles with stars show where the mills were located.

Red circle marks the location of the Harris Institute.

Figures 4.1 and 4.2

Different coloured circles mark the homes of the students, depending on the class they studied.

Key to the circles representing the classes:

Khaki	Clerical subjects
Yellow	Sciences
Dark green	Music theory
Dark pink	Art evening
Orange	Mathematics
Dark blue	Engineering
Purple	Foreign languages
Pale blue	Class not stated

INTRODUCTION

There has been considerable interest in life on the Home Front in Britain during the First World War, especially since the commemorations of the centenary, when many towns and cities remembered the impact on their own communities through local research projects.[1] This study is an extension of the work carried out on one of those projects which investigated the students at the Harris Institute, Preston,[2] and which sparked curiosity for a deeper understanding of just how much the evening classes meant to the women who took them, and what happened to them after the war. The First World War changed British society in profound ways, and the period was especially relevant to women, whose status and role was in transition. Much historical literature has emerged in the last few decades about how the war affected women's lives and experiences. Many of these studies focus, understandably, on their roles as workers in munitions factories, in nursing or with the Women's Land Army,[3] yet women were involved in many other occupations during the war, nor were women's lives solely devoted to work. It is acknowledged that domestic service remained the largest type of work women did in the war,[4] yet the nature of women's work was changing in the early part of the twentieth century, with new opportunities in shop work, elementary school teaching, and, significantly,

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[1] See '*Beyond the War Memorial Project'* available at https://everydaylivesinwar.herts.ac.uk/category/uclan-project/ and '*Voices of War and Peace'* available at https://www.voicesofwarandpeace.org See also Andrews M., Fleming N.C., Morris M. (eds) *Histories, Memories and Representations of being Young in the First World War.* Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Available at: https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49939-6_1 (2020)

[2] '*Beyond the War Memorial: Life, Work and Study in Preston during the FWW.'*

[3] See Braybon, Gail. *Women Workers in the First World War.* (London: Croom Helm Ltd, 1981); Thom, Deborah. *Nice Girls and Rude Girls - Women Workers in World War One* (London: I.B. Taurus & Co Ltd 1998); Woollacott, Angela. *On Her their Lives Depend - Munitions Workers in the Great War.* (California: University of California Press, 1994); Grayzel, Susan R. *Women's Identities at War – Gender, Motherhood, and Politics in Britain and France During the First World War* (Chapel Hill and London: The University of North California Press 1999).

[4] Holloway, Gerry. *Women and Work in Britain Since 1840*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2005. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uclan-ebooks/detail.action?docID=308569. Pp 131 to 133. Accessed 6 June 2022.

clerical work. More recent study has explored a wider range of women's experience on a more personal and local level,[5] to provide "a fuller comprehension of the complexity of women's lives in wartime Great Britain."[6] By studying women in rural as well as urban communities, in paid work outside the home and unpaid work, and through their philanthropic activities, historians[7] have expanded the historiography of the First World War, so that "…it is now much harder (if it was ever seriously possible) for historians to suggest a single 'women's' experience of the war in Britain."[8]

This is a study of education and the community of women who took evening classes at the Harris Institute during the First World War, an area of women's wartime experience that has received little attention. Many of the students were working during the day and attended classes in the evenings, on top of the domestic duties expected of them at home, all while the war affected their families and daily lives. This was a substantial commitment, and these women were willing to make the investment to improve their prospects, to gain skills for

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[5] See Andrews, Maggie, Lomas, Janis and Smoke, R. *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences Since 1914*, edited by M. Andrews, and Richard Smoke, Palgrave Macmillan UK, 2014. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uclan-ebooks/detail.action?docID=1880211. Accessed 26 May 2022; Also "New Perspectives on Women and the Great War." *Women's History, The Journal of the Women's History Network*, Summer 2015, Vol 2, Issue 2, ISSN 2059-0164. https://womenshistorynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/wh_summer_15_02_2.pdf. Accessed 26 May 2022.

[6] No author. "Editorial, New Perspectives on Women and the Great War." *Women's History, The Journal of the Women's History Network*, Summer 2015, Vol 2, Issue 2, ISSN 2059-0164, page 3. https://womenshistorynetwork.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/07/wh_summer_15_02_2.pdf. Accessed 26 May 2022.

[7] See Andrews, Maggie, Cannon, Charmian, Takayanagi, Mari, Pedersen, Sarah in *Women's History, The Journal of the Women's History Network*, Summer 2015, Vol 2, Issue 2, ISSN 2059-0164, pages 3 to 36, and Andrews, Maggie, Fell, Alison, Noakes, Lucy & Purvis, June "Representing, Remembering and Rewriting Women's Histories of the First World War," *Women's History Review*, 27:4, 2018, pp511 515. https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/09612025.2017.1292618?scroll=top&needAccess=true Accessed 26 May 2022

[8] Andrews, M, Lomas, J and Smoke, R (2014) and Monger, David. "Nothing Special? Propaganda and Women's Roles in Late First World War Britain." *Women's History Review*, 2014. Vol 23, No 4, p519 https://web.p.ebscohost.com/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=8b6ebaf6-57ed-4307-a4c3-f14ba14fb3dd%40redis. Accessed 26 May 2022.

work in their jobs or to move into new occupations. The aim of the study is to explore the role of education as a means of opportunity for women in Lancashire in the period, and the relevance of education to their wartime experience. By so doing, the study will address two gaps in the current literature: education and the importance of clerical work.

Women, Education and Opportunity during the First World War

The potential impact of vocational training on women's lives needs to be seen in the light of society's views and attitudes towards women. The students were living through a time of great change in British society, especially where women were concerned. At the start of the war women were not equal citizens with men but were granted limited franchise by the end; women had been campaigning for years for change, recognition and citizenship. Indeed, the period leading up to the war has been described as a time of "'domestic anarchy:' when Victorian liberal views collided with an ambiguous Edwardian modernity expressing itself most dramatically through social reform, constitutional change, industrial militancy and belligerent feminism."[9]

The Edwardian period was dominated by ideologies about class and gender that shaped women's daily lives. Feminist historians who studied the period leading up to the war[10] have described how attitudes to gender and class affected women. They found that beliefs about women's mental and physical capabilities shaped the assumption that their true vocation was 'motherhood',

[9] Simmonds, Alan. G.V. *Britain and World War One.* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012) page 5, quoting Elie Halevy *A History of the English People in the Nineteenth Century Vol VI, The Rule of Democracy 1905 – 1914* (London: Ernest Benn, 1932) page 5.
[10] See Braybon, 1981; Dyhouse, Carol. *Girls Growing Up in Late Victorian and Edwardian England.* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul Ltd, 1981); Purvis, June. *Hard Lessons – The Lives and Education of Working-Class Women in Nineteenth Century England* (Cambridge: Polity Press in Association with Basil Blackwell, 1989).

and this was used to limit their participation in education, work, and society in general, to keep them in the private sphere of the home. Consequently, their literature presents the case that women were brought up within social constraints and restrictions that influenced their daily lives in preparation for their role as wives and mothers. Dyhouse's influential work explored the way girls learned about their place in society and the sexual division of labour through "socialisation" within the family.[11] Dyhouse describes femininity as "economic and intellectual dependency: its prescribed service and self-sacrifice as quintessential forms of 'womanly' behaviour."[12] These ideals of femininity were dominated by the middle-class view which idealised 'woman and home'.

'Motherhood' was a form of femininity that was believed to unite all women, yet even this definition of femininity was class specific. Social class was "a central feature of Edwardian society."[13] Purvis's thorough analysis of the differentiation between the treatment of women and girls from different social backgrounds highlights the discrepancy in attitudes towards the two groups. While middle-class girls were being turned into "the perfect wife and mother," the middle-classes believed working-class women should aspire to be "'the good worker' (especially the 'good domestic servant') and the 'good wife and mother…'"[14] Subsequently these historians show that women's status and position were much debated during the period, and that these debates affected the education offered to them. Dyhouse's work examined how the ideal gender construct of femininity was reinforced through their education, and that this was more

[11] Dyhouse (1981) page 3.
[12] Dyhouse (1981) page 2.
[13] Simmonds (2012) page 7.
[14] Purvis (1989) page 70.

important in the eyes of society than academic achievement.[15] The provision of education for girls reflected this. Assumptions of class difference saw training in domestic service of primary importance for working-class girls, and for many middle-class girls, instruction was geared towards becoming "…decorative, modest, marriageable beings."[16]

Accordingly, a middle-class girl's education was not seen as an investment, and they were more likely to receive a rudimentary education followed by learning their social 'duties.' Subjects such as science were "not considered of much use to girls."[17] For working-class girls, elementary school provided a good basic education, but there was still an emphasis on training for domestic service and lessons on motherhood. Although domestic service was the largest type of trade for working-class women, Braybon points out, in her influential study of women's work, that women were also engaged in heavy, dirty work in the mines, or traditional female trades like mending and washing. These low status, low paid jobs provided little chance for women to improve their situation, and Braybon maintains that working-class women were "at the bottom of society's ladder."[18]

However, teaching and nursing, with their associated feminine traits of self-sacrifice and service, were deemed appropriate occupations for women, and could offer a career and some independence to ambitious working-class girls or lower middle-class girls. The relationship between teacher training and social

[15] Dyhouse (1981) page 2.
[16] Dyhouse (1981) page 43.
[17] Dyhouse (1981) page 41.
[18] Braybon, (1981) page 40.

mobility was examined by Widdowson in her excellent study.[19] Widdowson explains that from the 1840s, most elementary school teachers were women, and most were from the working classes, due in part to the poor quality of middle-class girl's previous education which meant they were ill-equipped to compete with girls from elementary school. Yet, by the end of the nineteenth century, "the college trained elementary schoolmistress… was likely to regard herself as middle class."[20] Likewise, Robinson's work is a thorough examination of teacher training in pupil-teacher centres. Robinson argues that the system provided pupil-teachers, many of whom were drawn from the working-class, with an education to rival that of secondary schools enabling them to go on to further education.[21] Together, these two historians make the point that teaching provided an opportunity for working-class women to pursue a career at a time when there were few other options open to them. There are, then, differing views about women's education before the war.

As noted earlier, the years leading up to the war saw ideologies in tension as women fought for recognition and equal citizenship, bringing debates about their role to the fore through the suffrage campaign. Women were challenging traditional notions of femininity, and the middle-class 'new woman' emerged, who, as described by Purvis, "…challenged custom in many ways by engaging in a wide variety of activities outside the sphere of the home; she could be found in paid work and especially in jobs that were the preserve of men (such as clerical work), seeking education, fighting for legal and political rights,

[19] Widdowson, Frances. *Going Up into the Next Class – Women and Elementary Teacher Training 1840 – 1914* (2nd Ed. London: Hutchinson & Co. (Publishers) Ltd 1983. First published by Women's Research and Resources Centre Publications Collective, 1980.)
[20] Widdowson (1983) page 11.
[21] Robinson, Wendy. *Pupil Teachers and their Professional Training in Pupil-Teacher Centres in England and Wales, 1870 - 1914.* (Lampeter: The Edwin Mellen Press Ltd, 2003) page 230.

challenging the subjection of women to men…"[22] On the eve of war, women were already pushing to transform and modernise their role. The changing role of women during First World War, particularly in industrial work, has understandably received a lot of attention from feminist historians.[23]

Woollacott's impressive work examines the experience of female munitions workers during the war, who she describes as a "powerful symbol of modernity" because they challenged gender order when women, the 'mothers of the nation', were participants in the war by making weapons, and they undermined class difference when they gained some financial independence through better wages.[24] Furthermore, Woollacott argues that although the ideal roles for men and women were just as well defined during the war as before, women munitions workers were just as much a part of Britain's military power as men.[25] Woollacott goes further and claims that "[g]ender is disrupted, constructed, and reconstructed during war…"[26] when women were needed to take men's place in industry. The meaning of gender is analysed in detail by Grayzel who describes the "…uneasy balance between preserving the home life, which the war was allegedly being fought to defend, and fostering changes in behaviour so that women could temporarily join men in sustaining their nations at war."[27]

The organisation of women's work and the cultural significance of the image of women doing war work was examined by Thom in her detailed collection of essays. The image of the female munitions worker still influences the public's

[22] Purvis (1989) page 62.
[23] See Woollacott (1994); Thom (1998); Grayzel (1999).
[24] Woollacott (1994) page 3.
[25] Woollacott (1994) page 15.
[26] Woollacott (1994) page 13.
[27] Grayzel (1999) page 244.

perception of women's role during the war. Photography was used by the government and the press to encourage recruitment, and to advertise women's patriotic role. Thom claims that the images of female munitions workers were used to emphasise "the novel, the exceptional and the photogenic,"[28] women heroically doing their bit, acting out of character, and only temporarily. Braybon agrees that women's work in the war was seen as unusual, even though they had worked in factories for years. It was assumed that women had no interest in skilled work, were not ambitious, and were not worth training because of the temporary nature of war work, and there was a drive to get women back into domestic roles after the war. Yet many of the women who worked in factories did gain new skills and were interested in their jobs, and although they were paid less than the men they replaced, women were better paid than before, and their standard of living improved; they gained in confidence, self-esteem and assertiveness.[29]

Nonetheless, prevailing views of a woman's place meant that there was still a fear that if women were well paid and gained a sense of freedom, they would abandon the home. The First World War did provide opportunities for women to gain independence, mobility, and job satisfaction through new occupations in industry, yet "even evidence about their war work failed to shake ideas about their true role."[30] It was still assumed that women were cheap, unskilled labour, and would leave work when they married. Beliefs about their roles as wives and mothers were used to keep their wages and prospects low,[31] and after the war

[28] Thom (1998) page 37.
[29] Woollacott (1994) page 5.
[30] Braybon (1981) page 229.
[31] Braybon (1981) page 32.

they were being pushed once again towards domestic service, which had been "the last job anyone wanted during the war."[32]

The work of these historians has examined the experience of women and girls in English society in the period leading up to, and during, the First World War. They have shown that women's role was well defined, that women's lives were affected by men's attitudes and class definitions and how girls learned their place in society early on. They have also shown that the reality of women's lives did not always fit in with these expectations. Widdowson and Robinson saw education and vocational training as an opportunity for social mobility, whereas Dyhouse and Purvis, writing from a feminist perspective, saw education as restrictive and constraining. However, these studies have not looked at opportunities for women's post-compulsory education during the First World War. Widdowson and Robinson's studies of vocational training end in 1914; Purvis's study examines post-compulsory education, but it relates to the nineteenth century; Dyhouse focusses on the role of education in reinforcing sexual division, rather than the opportunities of vocational training.

Braybon, Woollacott, Grayzel and Thom examined women's industrial work, and showed that the First World War was a "pivotal moment in the modern era"[33] as far as women's gender identity and national identity is concerned. It is understandable that they should focus on the munitions workers who challenged gender norms in such a clear way. Although they acknowledge that clerical work was more prevalent for women during the war than factory work, they have given it little attention due to the non-industrial nature of it, and the

[32] Braybon (1981) page 49.
[33] Grayzel (1999) page 2.

view that it was mainly done by middle-class women.[34] Similarly, there has been virtually no consideration of the role of education as a means for opportunity in the period. Acknowledging that the First World War saw opportunities for women to work in new roles in industry, this dissertation argues that vocational training – and its relationship with commercial work – was just as important and relevant to young women in Preston.

The Harris Institute as a Case Study

The Harris Institute was the main provider of post compulsory education in Preston, offering vocational training in subjects related to local industry. During the First World War, 4,574 student places were taken, and 1,247 of these were taken by women. The Harris Institute was therefore identified as a viable case study to explore women's participation in education during the period. The study will consider who was studying post-compulsory education and why, and how did their education impact their lives. It is hoped the findings will contribute to the discussion about women's changing opportunities during the conflict.

The Harris Institute Council kept a systematic record of the students enrolling on evening classes in the form of a set of registers, along with HM Inspectors Reports, Council Minutes and Institute prospectuses, currently held in the archives at the University of Central Lancashire (UCLan). The registers have been digitised and are easily accessible online,[35] and this fantastic record lists the students who attended the evening classes, Junior Day Schools and the art day classes in the period. As well as the classes they enrolled on, the registers provide detailed biographical information about the students: their name, age,

[34] See Braybon (1981) page 64; Widdowson (1980) page 79; Woollacott (1994) page 2; Simmonds (2012) page 129.
[35] The Class Registers area available online at https://uclandata.uclan.ac.uk/43/

address, occupation, and in some cases their previous education. This presents an opportunity to examine the profile of the students, look at their occupations during the war, and the types of classes and courses they were taking. By correlating subject class with occupation, a plausible assessment of women's aspirations and motivations can be proposed.

The detailed biographical information held in the class registers also enables further research into the back story and the forward story of the students. The majority of this information was found in the 1911 census which has been digitised and is easily accessible through online genealogy websites.[36] It provides relatively contemporary information about the families, listing the members of the households and their occupations, with additional details of age, birthplace and an indication of family size.

The census records provide valuable information about the families, but assigning socio-economic status, much less social class, remains difficult. As Waites notes, social class is "…a complex process of social differentiation we call, misleadingly, the class structure."[37] One common approach is to make a classification, primarily by occupation, but there are several variations as to how to group the occupations. Initially, two attempts, particularly relevant as they relate to education, were considered. Firstly, Robinson's book includes the London School Board's (LSB) system which was used in 1903 to assign categories of class to the students attending London pupil-teacher centres

[36] See https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/1911-census-for-england-and-wales or https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/categories/1911uki/

[37] Waites, Bernard. *A Class Society at War, England 1914 – 1918*. (Leamington Spa/Hamburg/New York: 1987) page 275.

based on the parents' occupations,[38] and this system was identified as a possible tool. However, although the system was used relatively close to the period studied here, the job definitions were based on London society, and not relevant to the Lancashire economy. This meant that there was not enough relevant information within the LSB criteria to form a coherent analysis, and so this method was rejected. Widdowson provided a set of tables of parental occupations by social class groupings based on the class registers of Whitelands College from 1847 to 1899.[39] These were useful, but again, trying to fit the occupations of Lancashire men into the same criteria proved difficult. Instead, in keeping with Widdowson and Robinson and other historians[40] who have constructed their own classifications of occupation, I have used my own. This method of classification is based on the type of occupations found in the specific sample of the students' households found in the 1911 census, and groups similar occupations together, in order to provide an indication of socio-economic differences among the students.

The students' stories did not end when the war ended, and this study wanted to know what happened to them afterwards, to see if there is any evidence that their education had provided opportunities for careers. Evidence of their circumstances after the war is difficult without the subsequent censuses, and the 1921 census has been made public too late to be incorporated here; instead, a variety of sources have been used, especially the 1939 Register. This is a survey that was taken of the entire British civilian population for the purposes of issuing National Identity Cards in preparation for the Second World

[38] Robinson (2003) page 258.
[39] Widdowson (1983) pages 84 to 87.
[40] See *Incomes, Inequalities & Industrialisation, Unit 7, Occupational Classification: The Census Returns for England and Wales* (N.p., N.d.) available at https://www.le.ac.uk/eh/teach/ug/modules/eh3107/occupations.pdf [Accessed 23 October 2020.]

War and is an easily accessible digital source.[41] It provides name, address, date of birth, marital status, occupation, and the names of other members of British households, along with any voluntary work being undertaken in the war effort. The evidence found in the 1939 Register was limited to the sample of traceable women, but it gives some evidence of how some of the former students were occupied twenty years later, and an indication of whether their education impacted their lives. In addition, life stories were further enhanced by looking at online databases which hold contemporary newspapers,[42] and searching the internet using keywords such as the students' name, family names, addresses or occupation type. Finding evidence about students later in life is more difficult because there is very little about most of the students. What is more, access to archives and libraries was severely limited because of the pandemic.

The evidence gathered from these sources then, is complex. In general, the systematic nature of the class registers and the number of women students who were registered allows for a cross-sectional study to take place. The registers give sufficient data to make simple quantitative analyses which indicate patterns, trends and correlations. The qualitative evidence is fragmentary but adds colour and individualises the life stories. The data was managed in two ways: information from the registers and evidence found in the supplementary sources was gathered onto a new database, where simple calculations could be made, and patterns and correlations discerned. 416 students[43] were researched in the supplementary sources, representing a third of the female students, so in addition to the new database, family trees of 181 of these students were

[41] See https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search-world-records/1939-register or https://www.ancestry.co.uk/search/collections/61596/
[42] See https://search.findmypast.co.uk/search/british-newspapers
[43] Made up of 107 women on the Commerce Class, 270 taking individual classes, 126 from Ashton and Fishwick, minus 87 individuals who feature in more than one of these categories.

created on the website ancestry.co.uk.[44] This method was chosen as a convenient way to keep the sources and records in one place for each individual, however, a family tree was not created for every student researched due to time constraints.

Outline of the Dissertation

The first chapter of this study provides a brief discussion of the development of Preston's economy from a market town to a major textile manufacturer. A short history of the Harris Institute follows, exploring how it evolved to meet the training needs of the local industry, especially during the First World War when it expanded its provision to women. This chapter also gives an overview of the type of classes women were taking, and where the students were drawn from. The Commerce class was particularly important to women during the war, and the students in this class have been used to show how the catchment area widened as the war progressed. The use of maps which compare 1914 with 1918 highlight these changes as well as the increasing number of female students. Chapters Two and Three explore the demographic profile of the students who lived in two contrasting areas of Preston to explore how opportunities in post-compulsory education affected women from seemingly different socio-economic groups. Their circumstances in 1911, during the war, and twenty years later are examined and compared. The group of students taking individual classes are analysed in Chapter Four. As noted above, over half the students were taking individual classes. They represent a mix of ages and occupations, and their diversity has enabled a study of changes in the class

[44] They can be viewed online at https://www.ancestry.co.uk/family-tree/tree and are identified with the suffix 'HI' before each family tree name.

subjects they were taking, especially as opportunities in new technical occupations and classes arose towards the end of the war.

The evidence gathered shows that there were changes in the provision of education for women, and they took advantage of opportunities in increasing numbers. These women came from different areas and backgrounds, but the importance of their education united them. The role of education as a means of opportunity for women during the war, and its inter-relationship with clerical work, is discussed in the conclusion.

CHAPTER ONE

PRESTON, THE HARRIS INSTITUTE, AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR

The Harris Institute prepared students for work in the local industry, and accordingly its relationship with the local economy was important. The inter-relationship of the two underpinned the benefits the students received when they enrolled for classes and courses, because as well as teaching vocational skills, the Harris Institute could in some cases assist students to obtain employment.[45] This chapter provides an overview of the economic landscape in Preston and background to the Harris Institute in the period leading up to and including the First World War. It highlights the place of female students within the Institute, which was expanding just before the war, and provides a survey of how the war affected the overall profile of female students.

Preston

Preston is situated in the north-west of England, half-way between London and Glasgow. It nestles just north of the River Ribble, which flows westwards from Yorkshire to the Irish Sea. Located within a large agricultural region, Preston was once a genteel market town, and by the mid 1800s was the administrative centre for Lancashire. Its unique location and climate meant it was ideal for the manufacture and production of textiles, and the success of the cotton industry transformed Preston into an important manufacturing town, which expanded rapidly as the industry grew. Preston's commercial and professional sector was strong, but the town was dominated by the textile industry, and by the end of the

[45] Harris Institute, Preston. Prospectus, Session 1914-15. (Preston: 1914). UCLan Special Collection, page 60.

19th century, "[l]aw and cotton had long been seen as the staple trades of Preston."[46]

Significantly, the cotton industry was the largest employer of women in the country after domestic service and the sewing trades, and Braybon proposes that "…the women weavers of Lancashire were…the elite amongst women workers…"[47] Unlike most of women's work, weaving was skilled, and because it was paid by piece-rate, women could earn the same wages as men doing the same work; it was also acceptable for women to continue working after marriage. Subsequently, women cotton weavers were important to the economy, could make a significant contribution to the family income, and had some independence not shared with many other working women. Mill work was not easy. The hours were long and conditions difficult – the environment in the mills was maintained for the benefit of the cotton, not the workers, and it was humid and damp. In Preston, many girls started working in the mills before the age of 14, working part time and attending school part time. In Roberts' excellent study of working-class women's lives, Roberts concluded that "more girls appear to have disliked weaving, or indeed mill work in general, than to have liked it."[48] Nevertheless, cotton weaving was important to women in Preston. Figures taken from the 1911 Board of Education HM Inspectors Report show that out of a population of around 117,000 people, approximately 20,000

[46] Pope, Rex and Phillips, Ken. *University of Central Lancashire – A History of the development of the Institution Since 1828*. (Preston: University of Central Lancashire, 1995) page 30.
[47] Braybon page 28.
[48] Roberts, Elizabeth. *A Woman's Place – An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890 – 1940*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1984) page 62.

were employed as cotton weavers, three quarters of whom were female. In contrast, cotton spinning employed about 3,000 men.[49]

In the years leading up to the First World War, the cotton industry had started to decline, and Preston was diversifying into new industries. Engineering was gaining in importance in the town, and the building trade and printing industry were growing. Engineering employed around 5,000 men, as did the building trades, and there were 4 to 5,000 people employed in the commercial sector.[50] The building of the Albert Edward Dock in Ashton in the 1890s benefited Preston when goods from around the world were imported[51] and distributed all over the country via the well-established railway network. The economy then, was dominated by one industry, cotton, which was of significant importance to women's labour. Although other industries were emerging, they offered limited opportunities for women.

The Harris Institute

Lancashire's industries needed a skilled workforce, and the Harris Institute had a very good reputation in the north of England for offering technical instruction. Its original purpose, when it was established in 1828 as the Institution for the Diffusion of Knowledge, was to bring basic education to the working-classes of Preston. However, the high membership fees and lack of spare time excluded many, and instead, membership expanded among the middle-classes. The organising body of the early Institution attempted to overcome this problem by

[49] Report: *Board of Education General Report of H.M. Inspectors on the Technical Schools and Evening Schools in the County Borough of Preston for the Period ending on the 31st July 1911,* page 1. UCLan Special Collection.
[50] HMI Report 1911, page 2.
51 Bowden, A. R. *Lancashire Past – Lancashire History Website and Blog. Preston Dock Curiosities.* Available at www.lancashirepast.com/2018/06/07/preston-dock-curiosities/ [accessed 21-09-2021]

appealing to local employers to extol the virtues of membership. Attempts to promote the advantages of education to the working-classes themselves were unsuccessful, and membership from this group remained very low. The social class difference between the organisers and the clientele, along with issues of spare time, cost, and the lack of basic education of the workers meant that they were not inclined to commit to it.[52] After some reorganisation there was more success among the working-classes, and by the 1850s at least, there is evidence that women were participating. By 1865, female students were taught in separate classes,[53] implying there were enough attending to warrant some reorganisation. As the organising body sought to evolve the Institution, it moved towards a technical college model, and it was this development that led to the formation of the Harris Institute in 1882, which attracted 520 students in its first year. By 1911, the Institute was run by a council made up of 28 members, about a quarter of whom were from the Local Education Authority, the rest representing local industries. It offered vocational classes through its Schools of Agriculture and Art, and the various Departments of Mechanical and Electrical Engineering, Building Trades, Science, Textile, Commercial and Domestic Science. As well as Day Schools, the Institute arranged evening classes, and it is these classes that form the main concern of this study.

The evening classes were arranged through the Science and Technical School and were divided into two streams - Technical Subjects which were related to local industry, and Scientific Subjects and Modern Languages. The latter were based around the Board of Education syllabus, designed to prepare the student for university degrees and scholarships.

[52] Pope and Phillips (1995) page 14.
[53] Pope and Phillips (1995) page 18.

The syllabus was organised into courses of related subjects, although some subjects could be taken as individual classes. Students were encouraged to take the organised courses, which usually took place three evenings a week, but under "special circumstances" they could apply to the Principal for individual classes.[54] Students were charged the same for an individual class as for the full organised course, which in 1914 was 7s 6d 0d, making individual classes a more costly option. Despite the costs, women were more likely than men to take individual classes. The class registers show that in 1914, 81% of the female students enrolled on individual classes compared to 33% of the male students. By 1918, the number reduced to 55% of the female students and 26% of the male students.[55] Time was a likely factor affecting women's availability to take evening classes. It was possible to take more than one individual class, but only around 9% of female students did. The classes taken as individual classes are the focus of Chapter Four.

Turning now to the matter of admission, the Institute accepted students who had either completed a 2-year course at a continuation school, run by the Preston Education Committee, or had passed an entrance exam. The continuation schools were designed for students leaving elementary school who intended to work in industrial, commercial or domestic areas, and were usually held on school premises in the evenings. On completion, the students were prepared and of a good standard to enter the Harris Institute for the third year of their training.[56] While this system provided good quality students, it was more

[54] *HI Prospectus 1915/16,* page 96.
[55] *Harris Institute Class Registers 1914 to 1918.* University of Central Lancashire Special Collection.
[56] *HI Prospectus 1914/15,* page 96.

difficult for older students if they had not attended continuation classes, or whose basic education was too poor to pass the entrance exam. Adult students could apply to the Principal for a place if they could prove it would be of benefit to them,[57] and a few adult women, some of whom were married, did attend.

However, admission was not straightforward for girls leaving school. As noted above, the continuation school system offered industrial, commercial or domestic classes, but only the domestic classes were available to girls. Added to this, a lack of suitable facilities in some parts of town meant girls either had to travel to different schools or miss out entirely.[58] Moreover, women were excluded from all the Schools at the Institute apart from the Training School of Domestic Science.[59] This School's main work was to train women for employment as domestic science teachers, but it also offered classes and courses for "ladies, cooks, housekeepers, matrons, practical dressmakers and milliners, or for girls just leaving school."[60] The 1911 HMI Report lamented that three quarters of the girls who might have gone on to study at the Institute dropped out at the continuation school stage, some after the first year, having decided not to pursue domestic studies any further. Yet even in 1911, the Inspector noted that girls were applying for commercial instruction at the Institute, but were not sufficiently prepared, having been excluded from commercial instruction at the continuation schools.[61] This led to an unsatisfactory decrease in the number of women students in the town. To boost the recruitment of women, the Inspector recommended extending the domestic course in the continuation school by another year and, more significantly, to

[57] *HI Prospectus 1914/15,* page 98.
[58] *HMI Report 1911*, page 5.
[59] *HMI Report 1911*, page 4.
[60] *HI Prospectus 1915/16,* page 65.
[61] *HMI Report 1911,* page 4.

introduce preliminary commercial work for girls at continuation schools.[62] By 1914, another HMI Report noted that although 426 women were enrolled at the School of Domestic Science, there were 83 female students doing other subjects. The report is vague on the details, but does reveal that the Commercial Department, which had recently established a Junior Commercial School, provided a two-year 'Day Commercial' course for both genders, and with 9 boys and 24 girls, the boys were outnumbered.[63]

This section has shown that girls faced obstacles in accessing classes at the Institute because of the gendered provision at both the continuation schools and the Institute itself, yet it was recognised in 1911 by the HMI that girls did want to take commercial classes. The Harris Institute had taken some small steps towards addressing the issue, so that in the 1913/14 session a small number of girls were taking the Commercial Day class, and there were female students elsewhere within the establishment. What follows is a brief account of the changing landscape at the Institute, as the war affected the classes it offered and types of students who attended.

The Harris Institute during the First World War

An initial look at the Council minutes[64] during the war would give the general impression of 'business as usual.' However, the number of male students fell, and in 1915 the Council was proud to announce that over 100 students had enlisted.[65] Although some teachers also enlisted, affecting staffing levels, the

[62] *HMI Report 1911,* page 8.
[63] *HMI Report 1914,* page 18.
[64] *Harris Institute Council Minute Book,* covering the period 1914 to 1929. UCLan Special Collection.
[65] Article: "*Annual Report" Preston Guardian, 2nd January 1915.* Preston. From a collection of Newspaper Cuttings, UCLan Special Collection.

Institute was able to provide new courses which helped Belgian refugees,[66] put on classes for wounded soldiers in commercial subjects,[67] and provided agricultural classes for demobilised officers.[68] Classes in munitions were proposed and advertised in the press, but because applications were received from young men of military age, it was decided not to go ahead with the classes.[69] A significant development as far as women were concerned, is that the Institute was asked by the Home Office to provide special six-week 'Day Commercial' courses to females aged over 17. The aim was to equip the women with the necessary qualifications so they could replace men, who could then be released to join the forces.[70] The first course took place in January 1916, and accommodated 44 students, although over 100 women had applied.[71] The evidence from the class registers shows that commercial and clerical classes were taken by women in increasing numbers in the next three years.

Table 1.1 below shows the number of enrolments made by students in each year of the war using data taken from the class registers. Not surprisingly, some students took more than one class, (around 9% of the female students enrolled on more than one class) and some attended in more than one year, and because of this, the analyses in this dissertation are based on the number of

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[66] Harris Institute Council Minute Book. *"School of Art, Minutes of the meeting 9th February 1915."*

[67] *Harris Institute Council, Minutes of the meeting 6th July 1917.*

[68] *Harris Institute Council, Minutes of the meeting 4th October 1918.*

[69] *Harris Institute Council, Minutes of the meeting 8th September 1915.*

[70] Article: No name. "Harris Institute, Preston. 33rd Annual Meeting. £1,000 Bequest from the Late Mr Frank Calvert. The War Service Courses." *Preston Herald,* 1st January 1916. Preston. Available at https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001667%2f19160101%2f101&stringtohighlight=harris%20institute%20meeting accessed 17:18 19 January 2022.

[71] No name. "Training the Ladies, 100 Applicants for Harris Institute Course." *Preston Herald,* 4th December 1915. Preston. Available at https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001667%2f19151204%2f086&stringtohighlight=harris%20institute%20commerce [Accessed 19 January 2022.]

enrolments made. The table clearly shows the increase in the proportion of classes taken by females, from 12% in 1914 to 35% by 1918. (It must be noted that there was a small number of students in each year whose gender was unclear from the registers. They are not included in these figures.)

Table 1.1. Number of enrolments made by male and female students, 1914 to 1918.[72]

Year	Total number of enrolments	Total number of enrolments by male students	Percentage	Total number of enrolments by women students	Percentage
1914	1,012	890	88	122	12
1915	962	747	78	215	22
1916	1,019	720	71	299	29
1917	1,044	665	64	379	36
1918	1,047	671	64	376	36
Total	5,084	3,693	73	1,391	27

The types of classes women were taking are shown in Table 1.2 below. I have grouped the different subject areas together for ease of analysis, and there now follows a brief guide to the content of the classes in each category. Commerce was an organised course, where students chose three or four classes from a list which included arithmetic, bookkeeping, commerce, English and commercial correspondence, French, geography, shorthand and typewriting. Clerical

[72] Information taken from the digitised version of the Harris Institute class registers, 1914 to 1918, available at https://uclandata.uclan.ac.uk/43/

subjects could also be taken as individual classes in bookkeeping, shorthand, typewriting and commercial correspondence. Students could take individual classes in foreign languages which included French, German, Latin, Italian, Spanish, Esperanto and Russian. The School of Art offered individual classes during the day or evening, and students could attend these classes two, three, four or five days a week.[73] Technical subjects included experimental mechanics and physics, machine construction, cotton spinning, engineering drawing, magnetism and electricity, weaving, design, typography and electrical engineering. The science classes included botany, theoretical chemistry, practical chemistry, inorganic chemistry, organic chemistry and elementary physics. Music (theory) and harmony, English and Mathematics classes were also available.

As stated previously, in the 1913/14 session, women were beginning to participate in a wider variety of subject than domestic studies.[74] What can clearly be seen in Table 1.2 below is that commerce and clerical subjects were the most popular, eventually making up over half the enrolments in the 5-year period, but women were also taking a variety of classes which ranged from academic to technical subjects. As the war progressed, enrolments in science subjects fluctuated, while art, music and English remained fairly constant and there was little demand for mathematics; foreign languages peaked in 1916 and 1917.

[73] *HI Prospectus 1915/16*, page 74.
[74] *HMI Report 1914,* page 18.

Table 1.2. Academic distribution of female students taking evening classes, including the art day class, 1914 to 1918.[75]

Class subject	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total	%
Commerce	18	73	101	135	152	479	35
Clerical	17	41	72	75	95	300	22
Foreign languages	17	17	48	51	34	228	16
Art day	14	10	2	7	15	48	3
Art evening	21	20	34	34	32	100	7
Technical	1	5	8	13	4	31	2
Music	14	23	23	26	22	108	8
Science	3	15	4	32	12	66	5
English	9	6	8	4	7	34	2
Mathematics	4	4	1	1	1	11	0.8
Total	118	214	301	378	376	1,387	

The increase in technical subjects in 1917 is interesting, and Chapter Four studies this distinctive group of students. There was a noticeable increase in female students in 1917, when the Institute provided "…special classes…in different subjects for special purposes, mainly to enable girls and women to take the place of men who have been or are likely to be called up."[76]

[75] Information taken from the digitised HI class registers 1914 to 1918.
[76] No Name. "Harris Institute, Annual Meeting of the Council, The Future of Education, Remarkable Scholarship Successes." *Preston Herald* (Preston) 20 January 1917. Available at: see next page for link. https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0001667%2f19170120%2f015&stringtohighlight=harris%20institute [Accessed 29 January 2022.]

What now follows is a study of where the female students came from, using the addresses of the women who enrolled on the most popular course – Commerce. This will provide a sense of the general catchment area before the study focusses on two particular parts of Preston in Chapters Two and Three. The location of the homes of the 1914 Commerce class cohort and the 1918 cohort were plotted on to maps by the author, using Google MyMaps.[77] Figures 1.1 and 1.2, below, reveal the catchment area by showing all the Commerce students' homes at the start and at the end of the war. Figures 1.3 and 1.4 focus on the central areas of Preston, and are accompanied by a brief discussion of the types of neighbourhoods some of the students lived in. Because the maps were created using Google maps, they include modern landmarks, which could not be avoided. The homes of the students are marked by purple circles and the central location of the Harris Institute is highlighted.

In 1914, 18 women enrolled on the Commerce class. Two thirds of them lived within 1 mile of the Institute, but some lived up to seven miles away. In the north, two sisters lived in Brock, and to the south, one student lived in Leyland. Interestingly, the students are located in a more or less north south vertical alignment. Transport into Preston may have been an important factor, but the method of transport to and from the Institute has not been researched in this dissertation. Figure 1.2 shows the homes of the students who attended the Commerce class in 1918. What is striking in this map is the increase in numbers, and the broadening of the catchment area.

[77] Attribution: Map Dated © 2022 United Kingdom. Created in 'Google MyMaps' by the author in 2021/22. They can be viewed online at https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

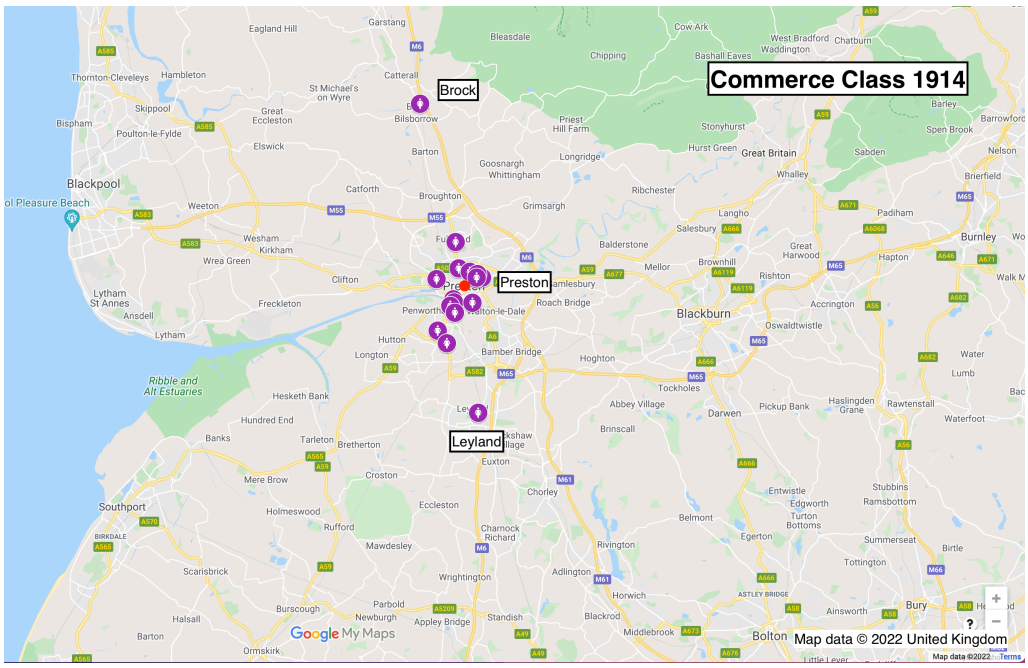

Figure 1.1: The location of the Commerce class students' homes in 1914. (Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[78]

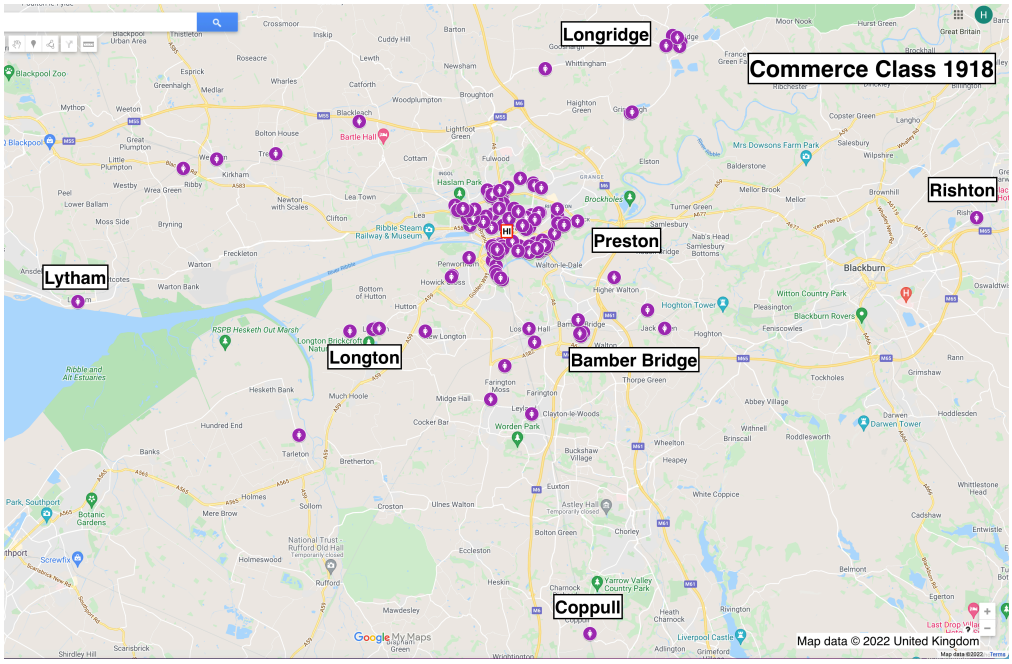

Figure 1.2. The location of the Commerce class students' homes in 1918. (Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[79]

[78] Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_I09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 [Accessed 28-1-2022.]

[79] Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_I09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 [Last accessed 28-1-2022.]

By 1918, two thirds still came from central Preston, but students were now travelling from further afield; some students lived up to 12 miles away, in Lytham, Rishton, Longridge and Coppull. The apparent north south alignment seen in 1914 is no longer visible, and the students outside central Preston are more spread out compared to 1914. It is still possible to discern clusters though: in Longridge to the north-west, Longton in the south-west, and Bamber Bridge, south-east. By comparing these two maps, the rise in the number of women seeking vocational training at the Harris Institute is clearly illustrated.

Turning now to the central area of Preston. Figures 1.3 and 1.4[80] below incorporate the town's 19th century ward boundaries taken from Nigel Morgan's excellent survey of housing in Preston in the period 1840 to 1914.[81] Morgan describes the character of the different wards by basing his assessment on the rate of infant mortality and the type of housing found in each area in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.[82] Some areas were dominated by the cotton mills, like Fishwick, St Peter's and the northern part of the Park ward, where housing was generally in the form of terraced mill-workers cottages. The town centre area of St John's was very old with poor quality housing, whereas the central part of Christ Church was middle-class. Meanwhile, Ashton was a growing middle-class suburb.[83]

[80] Attribution: Map Dated © 2022 United Kingdom. Created in 'Google MyMaps' by the author in 2021/22. They can be viewed online at https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.
[81] Morgan, Nigel. *Deadly Dwellings - The Shocking Story of Housing and Public Health in a Lancashire Cotton Town, Preston 1840 to 1914.* (Preston: Mullion Books, 1993.) page 99.
[82] Morgan (1993) pages 99 to 103.
[83] Morgan (1993) page 99.

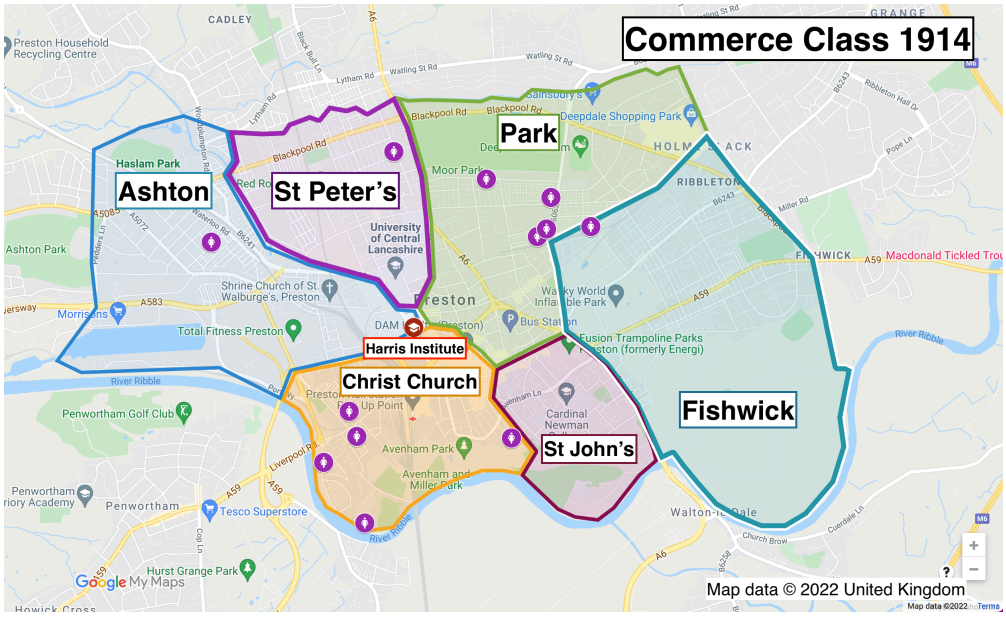

Figure 1.3. Showing the location of Commerce class students' homes in 1914, in central Preston, incorporating 19th century ward boundaries.

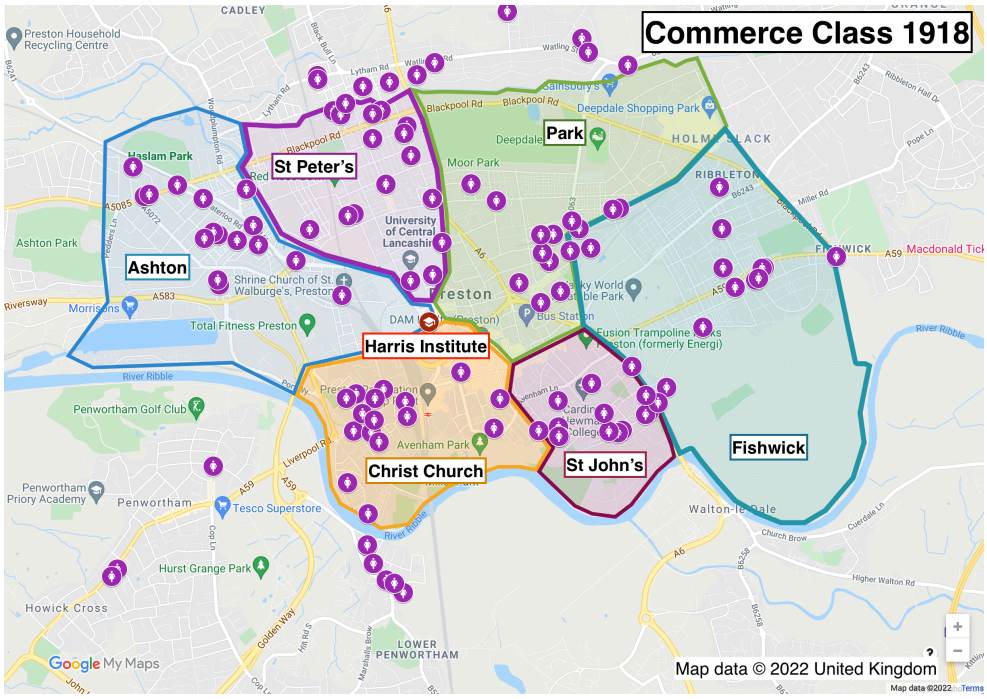

Figure 1.4. Showing the location of Commerce class students' homes in 1918, in central Preston, incorporating 19th century ward boundaries.

(Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[84]

[84] Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

Comparing Figure 1.3 with Figure 1.4 reveals the changes that took place in the period, the most obvious being the increase in numbers from all parts of town, but it is also possible to discern clusters within these central areas. In 1914, two clusters appear, in the northern part of the Park ward and the south-west side of Christ Church. There were no Commerce students living in St John's or Fishwick in 1914. By 1918, although there were more students in general, coming from more parts of town, there still appear to be distinct groups coming from the same neighbourhoods.

In Roberts' excellent study of the communities in Preston,[85] she described the importance of neighbourhoods to working-class families. People lived near extended family and had close relationships with their neighbours, creating little communities within a few nearby streets. These communities recognised their own geographical boundaries, and offered a system of support to the families who lived there, especially the women, such as friendship, advice and practical help. They also formed a system of social control where people kept an eye out for each other and everyone understood the 'unwritten rules' of acceptable behaviour.[86] It may be that there were girls from just this type of neighbourhood, who were permitted to attend the Institute accompanied by friends, family and neighbours, thereby overcoming some of the perceived concerns associated with going out in the evening, mixing with the opposite sex, and being somewhat independent. The female students who attended the Harris Institute were increasingly breaking out of the geographical limitations imposed on working-class women.

[85] Roberts (1984) page 184.
[86] Roberts (1984) page 192.

Conclusion

The aim of the Harris Institute was primarily to provide vocational training for its students, usually working men and boys, to fit them for jobs in the local economy or to supplement and develop the knowledge of people already in work, although some seemed to study for academic or leisure purposes. The Institute relied on close links with the local industry and employers, and managed to reorganise itself to meet the needs of local industries or simply as a matter of survival, especially during the First World War. It responded to the impact of the war with new courses and classes, some of which were to have a significant relevance for women, particularly as they trained for office work as jobs became available in increasing numbers. As the war progressed, the number of women increased threefold, and from 1915, a small number of women were attending classes in technical subjects. As the textile industry began to decline, which employed many local women, the Harris Institute offered the chance for women to reach their potential in new areas of commercial work, and the number of women on the class registers shows they were taking advantage of it. While it was still not common for women to come into this type of education in 1914, the few students who did were leading the way, and the increase in their numbers by 1918 shows how important this type of training was to women. But what kind of women were they? The next two chapters look at the students from two contrasting areas of Preston, to see what kind of social background they came from.

CHAPTER TWO

FEMALE STUDENTS FROM ASHTON

The two connected chapters that follow present an analysis of the female students who lived in two areas of Preston known as Ashton and Fishwick, to find out what type of women attended the Institute. The chapters are organised into sections, and the analysis begins with the number of female students and their ages. There follows a discussion about their social background, based on the occupations of their parents as they were recorded in the 1911 census. The students' own occupations are then studied to show the range of work women were doing and how that changed during the war. Following this a study of the subject classes being taken is made, and plausible insights about why they were studying. I have then sought to discover if there is any evidence of long-lasting benefits from their time at the Harris Institute. As discussed in the Introduction, women's participation in new areas of work during the First World War was considered to be a temporary measure. I have therefore looked for evidence about their occupational status twenty years on to see if it supports this view.

Before proceeding to the students' profile, a brief description of the area is given. Ashton is situated northwest of the Harris Institute, and lies just north of the River Ribble. In 1914, much as it is today, it was made up of spacious, tree lined avenues of good quality detached and semi-detached housing with front and rear gardens,[87] a peaceful haven away from the town centre. With street names like Bank Place, Prospect Place and Garden Walk, the area was

87 Ashton Conservation Area Character Appraisal document, Preston City Council Consultation draft – March 2016. Available at https://www.preston.gov.uk/media/677/Ashton-conservation-area-character-appraisal/pdf/Appendix-Ashton-Conservation-Area-Character-Appraisal.pdf?m=636933399910970000 [Accessed 28 September 2021]

optimistic and aspirational. Many of the houses occupied by the students and their families were large[88] and equipped with "all modern conveniences" such as electric light[89] and electric bells.[90] According to a local newspaper, a house on Victoria Parade could be rented for £35,[91] equivalent to around £2,750.[92] To the west was Ashton Park, a private house occupied by the successful mill owning Calvert family, and beyond that were open fields and farmland.

Figure 2.1 below, (which was taken from Google maps and unavoidably includes modern landmarks[93]) has been adapted by the author to show the area of Ashton, based on the 19th century ward boundaries taken from Nigel Morgan's survey of housing, as mentioned in Chapter One.[94] Use has also been made of the 1912 Ordnance Survey map[95] to find the location of industry and mills at that time, which have been marked on the map along with the location of the students' homes (please see the key below.)

88 This is deduced from evidence taken from the 1911 census, which states the number of rooms in the house not including the scullery, landing, lobby, closet or bathroom. Of the 58 Ashton houses found in the 1911 census, 40 had 6 or more rooms.
89 No name "House to be let – detached residence Tulketh Road, Ashton-on-Ribble." *Lancashire Evening Post*, (Preston) 5 August 1903 Available at https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19030805%2f140&stringtohighlight=tulketh%20road [Accessed 28 January 2022]
90 No name. "Silver Hatchet Gang." *Lancashire Evening Post,* (Preston) 30 January 1907. Available at https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19070130%2f098&stringtohighlight=silver%20hatchet%20gang [Accessed 28 January 2022]
91 No name. "To Be Let. 31 Victoria Parade, Ashton-on-Ribble." *Lancashire Evening Post,* (Preston) 17 July 1918 . Available at: https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19180717%2f012&stringtohighlight=to%20let%20ashton [Accessed 29 October 2021.] The frequency of payment was not stated.
92 Using the National Archives currency convertor available at: https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 20 October 2021].
93 The map can be accessed on Google MyMaps with this link: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&usp=sharing
94 Morgan (1993.) page 99.
95 Information of the location of industry taken from online source: National Library of Scotland, OS 25 inch England and Wales, 1841-1952, Lancashire LXI.9. Revised 1909, Published 1912. *https://maps.nls.uk/view/126517589* [Accessed October 2021]

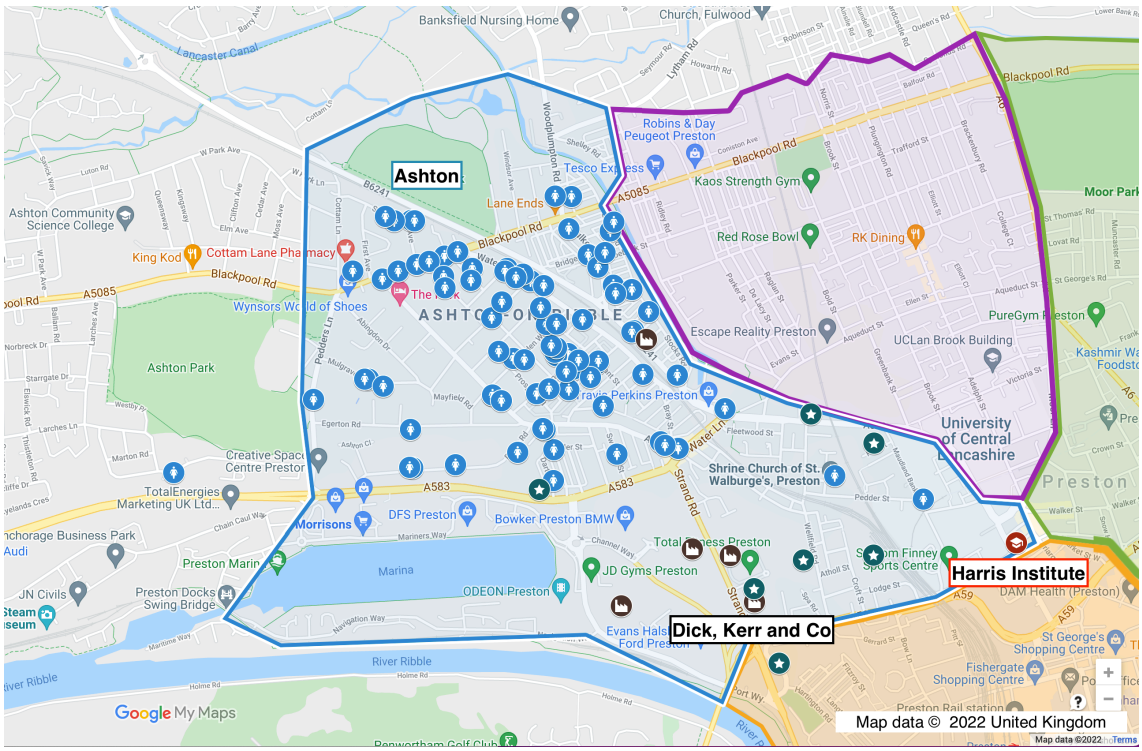

Figure 2.1· Ashton, showing the location of the homes of all the Ashton students who attended from 1914 to 1918, and the location of industry and mills. (Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[96]

Key: Blue circles mark the students' homes

Brown circles with factory symbol show location of industry,

Green circles with stars show where the mills were located,

Red circle marks the location of the Harris Institute.

Although mainly residential, there was significant industry along the southern border of Ashton, where Dick, Kerr and Co was located. This large electrical and engineering firm, mentioned in the previous chapter, manufactured electrical machinery for the tramway and railway, metal filament lamps, and electrical appliances,[97] and was of great importance to Preston's growing

[96] Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

[97] Graces Guide to British Industrial History. Dick, Kerr and Co. Available at: *https://www.gracesguide.co.uk/Dick,_Kerr_and_Co* [Accessed 21 September 2021.]

engineering industry. The Albert Edward Dock, which opened in 1892 (and is shown on Figure 2.1 in its modern guise as 'Marina'), was the largest single dock in Europe at the time, where hundreds of ships delivered their cargo each year, such as fruit, cattle, timber, clay, oil, petrol, cotton and wheat, imported from all over the world.[98] Within commuting distance of the students' homes were the textile mills, foundries, and commerce of Preston. The majority of the families from Ashton benefitted from employment in these areas of work along with the luxury of living away from the pollution and congestion of the town centre.

Ashton students and family background

Ashton, then, was a pleasant place to live, with much of the housing located away from industry and mills but within a close commute of Preston's commercial centre and the emerging new industries in engineering and the docks. Before examining the family background, a brief look at how many students from Ashton attended the Institute in the period. Some of the numbers are small, so percentages have been included only for indicative purposes. Between 1914 and 1918, 82 women from Ashton went to the Harris Institute, and this group made up around 9% of the female cohort. Their numbers increased during the war, in fact there were four times more Ashton women in 1918 than there had been in 1914. As noted in Chapter One, around 9% of the female students took more than one class, but the proportion of Ashton women taking more than one class was slightly higher, at 13%. This could indicate a few things: they may have had more money to spend on classes, they may have had more time for classes, and they may have had more aspiration for

98 Bowden, *Preston Dock Curiosities.* Available at www.lancashirepast.com/2018/06/07/preston-dock-curiosities/ [Accessed 21 September 2021]

themselves. The following analyses will examine the profile of this group, and, as stated in the introduction, in order to cater for multiple attendances by some of the students, the figures are based on the number of enrolments the Ashton women made, which was 125. Table 2.1 below shows the number of enrolments made by all the female students at the Harris Institute in each year of the war, and in the next column, the number who were residing in Ashton.

Table 2.1. Number of enrolments by female students at the Harris Institute 1914 to 1918, and the number from Ashton.

Academic year	Total number of enrolments by female students from all areas	Number of enrolments by female students from Ashton	Percentage from Ashton
1914	122	9	7
1915	215	18	8
1916	299	23	8
1917	379	39	10
1918	376	36	10
Total	1,391	125	9

This shows a three-fold increase in the cohort as a whole, but as noted above, the Ashton women were attending at a slightly faster rate, particularly in 1917, which saw a large increase in the number of women students in general, as was mentioned in the previous chapter. Looking at the ages of the students shows that the majority were 16- to 17-year-olds. Table 2.2 below shows the number of

students in each age bracket. Only those who attended in 1914 and in 1918 are represented to highlight changes in the period.

Table 2.2. Age of female students living in Ashton, comparing 1914 with 1918, based on number of enrolments.

Age bracket	Number of enrolments in 1914	Percentage	Number of enrolments in 1918	Percentage
Under 14	1	11	0	
14-15	0		4	11
16-17	3	33	15	42
18-19	2	22	4	11
20-24	1	11	8	22
25-29	1	11	0	
30+ / adult	1	11	5	14
Total	9		36	

Table 2.2 shows that by 1918, there was an increase in 14- to 17-year-olds who made up more than half the group. 20- to 24-year-olds and those aged over 30 also increased. The presence of older women cannot be attributed to an increase of married women or widows, who might plausibly be training for economic reasons, because there was only one married woman (aged over 30) and there were no widows attending.[99] What these figures show is that although

99 This has been deduced by the fact the women had the same surnames in 1911 (when they were shown on the census as single), as they had when they registered at the Institute, apart from Mrs Moyle who was not a widow when she enrolled.

most students were aged 16 to 17, by 1918 women over 20 and over 30 were an important element at the Institute.

There now follows a study of the parents' occupations to see what type of families the students came from. Analysis of socio-economic status is problematic, especially for women, because a woman's social position in society is not easy to determine, and usually based on the men they live with. Most of the students had occupations of their own, and there may have been siblings working affecting the family income; following standard conventions, the occupation of the head of the household is used as an indicator of family background and status, which it is acknowledged cannot be drawn with any accuracy. Information about the parents' occupations was sought in the 1911 census, and 93% of the Ashton families were found. However, four fathers were deceased by 1911, their earlier occupations have not been included in this study. If students lived with a guardian, the guardian's job has been included. If the students were married, their husband's occupations have been included. If the fathers were unemployed in 1911, this information has been included in the analysis. In one family, the students' mother was the main breadwinner: her husband was deceased; in two other families, the mother worked as well as the father, so that 3% of the Ashton mothers were employed. These three women's occupations have been included. There may have been more mothers working, but the information was not recorded in the census; it is acknowledged that occupational information with respect to women may not be complete in the census, because it is possible that some women may have been working but did not declare it. However, acknowledging these limitations, the census provides information that cannot be found elsewhere about the occupations of

this generation of women. Taking this into account, the occupations of the main breadwinners were found for 119 of the 125 enrolments.

The parents who worked in 1911 were engaged in a variety of jobs. To enable an analysis to take place, as noted in the Introduction, I developed a method of classification based on the types of occupations, using four broad categories:

Trade (small employers, shopkeepers, buying or selling goods and services),
Clerical (office work, local government, municipal corporation workers),
Industrial (mariners, engineers, draughtsman), and
Professional (clergy, headteacher, lecturer, solicitor).

I accept that using terms to describe the nature of their work has limitations, especially where trades overlap, for example a joiner or builder has been categorised as a manual job, but a master builder or master joiner is categorised as trade. However, this way of categorisation provides a helpful tool for understanding the general type of work undertaken by the parents and is used here to give an indication of the types of families the students came from. This will enable a comparison with the parents from Fishwick, explored in the next chapter, which will be presented in the conclusion. I will begin with an overview of the parents' occupations, using the four categories identified above. Firstly, a summary of the findings is presented in Table 2.3 below. Having established the numbers, the next section looks more closely into the occupations and families within each category.

Table 2.3. Overview of the occupations of parents of the female Ashton students who enrolled, 1914 to 1918.

Year	Industrial	Trade	Clerical	Professional	Unemployed	Total
1914	3	2	3	1	0	9
1915	5	5	4	3	1	18
1916	6	6	6	5	0	23
1917	15	11	8	3	0	37
1918	17	6	5	2	2	32
Total	46	30	26	14	3	119
Total	39%	25%	22%	12%	3%	

These statistics show that the majority of students living in Ashton came from families employed in industrial occupations, followed closely by trade or clerical jobs. The biggest increase in these three types of occupation was in 1917, and students from ‘industrial’ families continued to increase in 1918, although at a slower rate than in the previous year. The proportion of women from professional families steadily increased in the first 3 years of the war, but fell in the last two, so that overall, 12% came from professional families. There now follows a more detailed study of each category, starting with industrial occupations.

Industrial work covers a broad range of occupations with differing degrees of skill, and in this study is taken to mean those working in Preston’s principal industries - cotton, engineering, building, printing, the docks and a group of miscellaneous including railway carriage and car builder, electrician, railway carriage stoker, foreman, iron turner and general labourers. 38% of the parents

worked in industrial occupations; most were engaged in engineering such as brassfinisher, designer, electrical engineering draughtsman, hydraulic engine fitter and Master Engineer. The cotton industry employed 6 men in skilled posts (one tape sizer[100] and five in supervisory roles as managers and overlookers[101]) and 3 women cotton weavers. The docks provided employment for 8 men, who worked as master mariners, mercantile marine workers, a chief dock foreman, and a sea going engineer. Table 2.4 below shows the number of parents who were engaged in the different types of industrial work in 1911, and the years their daughters attended the Institute. This table highlights the importance of engineering to the families in Ashton.

Table 2.4. Breakdown of types of industrial occupations of the Ashton parents in 1911, pertaining to students who attended in 1914 to 1918.

Year	**Engineering**	**Cotton**	**Docks**	**Builders**	**Printing**	**Misc**[102]	**Total**
1914	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
1915	2	2	1	0	0	0	5
1916	0	1	1	1	0	4	7
1917	4	3	1	1	2	3	16
1918	7	2	4	1	1	2	17
Total	14	9	8	3	3	7	46
Total	30%	20%	17%	7%	7%	15%	

100 A tape sizer was considered a highly skilled job, which involved sizing material with glue. Information taken from https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lancashire_Amalgamated_Tape_Sizers%27_Friendly_Society [Accessed 11 June 2021].
101 Overlookers were in charge of a group of weavers, see Roberts, Elizabeth. *Women's Work 1840 - 1940* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995. First published 1988.) page 25.
102 Miscellaneous includes railway carriage and car builder, electrician, railway carriage stoker, foreman, iron turner and general labourers.

Moving now to the category identified as trade, which was the next largest group. Just over a quarter of the Ashton parents worked for themselves running their own businesses. These businesses ranged from shopkeepers[103] and salesmen[104] to small employers running a brass foundry, a sheet metal workshop, a jeweller and a coal merchant; there were also master builders and joiners, a hotel keeper, and two insurance agents or collectors. Table 2.5 below shows the numbers engaged in each type of trade.

Table 2.5. Breakdown of types of trade of the Ashton parents in 1911, pertaining to students who attended in 1914 to 1918.

Year	Sales	Shop keeper	Employer	Insurance agent or collector	Master builder and joiner	Hotel	Total
1914	0	0	0	1	1	0	2
1915	1	0	2	1	1	0	5
1916	2	1	2	0	1	0	6
1917	5	4	1	0	0	1	11
1918	1	3	0	2	0	0	6
Total	9	8	5	4	3	1	30
Total	30%	27%	17%	13%	10%	3%	

The majority of this group were working for themselves, with the possible exception of the salesmen and insurance agent and collectors, but they were

103 A grocer, draper, hatter and a newsagent.
104 commercial travellers selling cotton cloth, drapery and flour milling equipment, and a rope and twine dealer.

still relatively autonomous. Again, 1917 saw an increase in students, and they were mostly the daughters of salesmen and shopkeepers.

The third largest group of occupations were the clerical workers, shown in Table 2.6 below, the majority of whom were employed by local government including law clerks at the county offices, an Inspector of Nuisances and a dock checker. There was also the Secretary of Preston Gas Company, Preston's Insurance Chief and the Superintendent of the Prudential Assurance Company; there were clerks with the railway, a corn merchants and an iron foundry, and a bookkeeper at the soap works.

Table 2.6. Breakdown of types of clerical work undertaken by Ashton parents in 1911, pertaining to students who attended in 1914 to 1918.

	Local Government	Insurance/ Assurance	Clerks	Bookkeeper	Total
1914	1		2		3
1915	4				4
1916	5			1	6
1917	2	5		1	8
1918		1	3	1	5
Total	12	6	5	3	26
Percentage	46%	23%	19%	12%	

Interestingly, although the numbers from this group fluctuate and there are gaps where none attended, they match the general trend seen in the other categories. 1917 saw increased attendance in female students in general, and

the daughters from the Insurance/Assurance group, which may possibly be deemed semi-professional, joined the throngs of young women enrolling that year.

Moving on to the professional families: they were made up of a solicitor, clergy, a headteacher, a lecturer at the Harris Institute and a managing director. There were more students from professional homes attending in 1915 than the other years, and although, as previously stated, 1917 saw a general increase in female students as more classes were provided to train them to release men for the front, those from professional families were declining. By the end of the war, their numbers were back to the level they were in 1914.

In sum, the Ashton students came from comfortable homes where 97% of the parents were in work. In only three cases the main breadwinner was unemployed. Most of the men worked in skilled jobs mainly connected to engineering, and they were increasingly sending their daughters to the Institute in each year of the war. Men employed in trade running their own businesses were the next largest group, although their numbers declined slightly towards the end of the war, along with the clerical workers, who ranged from clerks to Government Inspectors and heads of departments. Only 12% were in professional occupations, and their numbers were declining by 1918. Men in skilled industrial, trade and clerical occupations, were motivated, worked hard, and had a level of success that meant they could afford to pay for post-compulsory education for their daughters and wives, but they also had the progressiveness to invest in their daughters' careers. The students themselves wanted to gain valuable life and vocational skills to fit them for paid work when

opportunities arose as the war progressed, and some may have been supporting themselves, as the majority were in paid work.

Ashton Student Occupations and Studies

Turning now to the students' own occupations. From the information provided in the class registers, 81 (or 65%) of the 125 places were taken by women who were in paid work in the five years of the war, the remainder having no occupation listed on the register. Over two thirds of those working were in clerical jobs (which includes clerks, typists, shorthand typists and bookkeepers). Teachers were the next largest group. There were 12 factory workers, only 3 of whom worked in a cotton mill; the others worked as lamp makers, a munitions worker, an examiner of wireless valves, and tracers (a skilled job in engineering.[105]) There was a shop assistant and one a dressmaker, (shown as 'other' in the table below). Table 2.7 below shows the distribution of the students in these occupations, which have been classified into broader categories for ease of analysis.

The scale of the increase in clerical workers can clearly be seen. 1918 saw an increase in numbers from teaching and factory work, but the number of women with no job at all was declining, though still fairly significant. The women from the traditional trades and cotton workers was negligible, and reduced to nil by the end of the war.

105 Tracer: this was a skilled job in the drawing office of an engineering firm where a tracing of an engineering drawing was made manually in ink onto linen. *Blog at the Ballast* The Ballast Trust, available at: http://ballastblog.blogspot.com/2018/05/women-working-in-industry-female-tracers.html [Accessed 24 September 2021.]

Table 2.7. Ashton students' occupations by category, 1914 to 1918.

Year	None	Clerical	Teaching	Factory	Cotton factory	Other	Total
1914	7	1	1				9
1915	8	7	1	1[106]		1	18
1916	9	9	12	2		1	24
1917	12	16	5	2[107]	3		38
1918	8	16	6	6[108]			36
Total	44	52	15	9	3	2	125
Total	35%	42%	12%	7%	2%	1%	

So far, I have shown that the Ashton women were from families with high employment, where their fathers worked in skilled manual jobs, trade or the clerical sector, many of which were connected to engineering. A review of the students' own jobs shows that in 1914, 22% of the students were in paid occupations, and by 1918, the proportion rose to 78%. The predominance of clerical workers is clear, yet as women moved away from traditionally feminine occupations, there was still a continuing place for teachers and non-working women, and a small number were working in a new category within a skilled engineering department.

The next section is a study of the types of class subject the women were studying, showing the numbers, how the classes and courses relate to the occupations of the students, and changes in the period. As described in

106 Lamp maker.
107 One lamp maker, one tracer.
108 Four tracers, one examiner of wireless valves, one munitions worker.

Chapter One, the Institute offered instruction in two ways: organised courses and individual classes. Of the 125 enrolments made by the Ashton women during the war, 41 were organised courses, and 84 individual classes. This indicates a willingness to invest more financially, because individual classes were less value for money, but were more convenient if time was an issue. The distribution of classes taken by the Ashton students is shown in Table 2.8, below. The organised Commerce class has been included with the individual clerical subjects.

Table 2.8. A summary of the number of students taking each class subject.

Class subject area	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total	Total
Clerical	1	8	11	17	19	56	45%
Foreign languages	3	2	5	6	5	21	17%
Art	2	5	5	2	3	17	14%
Technical[109]	0	0	1	4	4	9	7%
Music	2	1	1	2	0	6	5%
Science	0	1	0	6	2	9	7%
English	0	1	0	1	3	5	4%
Mathematics	1	0	1	0	0	2	2%
Total	9	18	24	38	36	125	

The most popular classes were in clerical subjects. These students were mostly 16 to 17 years old, but they ranged in age from 14 to 38. Only four of the clerical

109 The technical classes taken were in cotton weaving, engineering drawing, and mechanical engineering.

students were not working. Of those who did work, 88% were already in clerical occupations. There was a small number of classes taken by women from different trades[110] who may have been considering changing career. 24-year-old Elizabeth Robson, dressmaker, and Margaretta Loveluck, 21, an electric lamp worker, certainly changed career, because when they enrolled the following year, they were both was working as clerks. The typical clerical student then was aged 16 to 17 and working in a clerical job. There was a small number of slightly older women from different trades taking clerical subjects.

The next most popular subjects were modern languages, art and music, and the profile of these students was different to the clerical students. They were generally slightly older, in the late teens to mid-twenties (although their ages ranged from 11 to 45). 78% were in paid occupations, half were teachers, which appears to relate to the classes taken; the other half were office workers and one munitions worker who seem to be taking classes for pleasure or academic interest. English and mathematics were taken by 7 students aged 14 to 23 and none of them were working. The science classes were taken by students most of whom were teachers in their early twenties.

Nine students took technical lessons in cotton weaving, mechanical engineering and engineering; they all worked, and appear to be in occupations related to the class subject, apart from one who worked as a clerk. The students taking engineering drawing were tracers aged 15 and 16, indicating that it was mostly younger women who were engaged in and training for new areas of work. This group of students are studied in more detail in Chapter Four.

110 A dressmaker, a shop assistant, a music teacher, two electric lamp makers, one wireless valve examiner.

The evidence so far has shown that the women from Ashton came from families where 97% of the heads of household worked, but only 65% of the students worked. However, the proportion of Ashton students in employment was higher in 1918 than it had been in 1914. Most of the students worked in clerical jobs, but a notable number worked in teaching or factory jobs. More classes were taken in subjects related to their jobs than not, but a small number were taking classes in unrelated subjects. 35% of the Ashton women did not work, and they tended to study art and music, English and mathematics. Towards the end of the war, there was an emerging group of women working in engineering, and they were taking technical subjects related to their work. Moving on now to consider their circumstances later in life, the next section looks to see if there is any evidence of long-lasting effects on their careers after their wartime education.

Future Careers

There is very little information available about the female students in the years immediately after the war, but some evidence about the Ashton group has been found. The records show that one emigrated with her family to Canada in 1919,[111] and three of the students were deceased by 1939,[112] which means that evidence for 59 of the 82 women, or 72%, was located. The marital and occupational status of those found revealed that 36 were married, 22 remained single, and one was a widow.

[111] Clarice Cartmell, 19-year-old munitions worker, who studied foreign languages in 1918.
[112] Mary Jane Reeder was 29 when she attended the art day class in 1916; Phyllis Clitheroe was 19 in 1915 when she enrolled on the art day class; Alice Smirk was a 19 year old clerk when she took the commerce class in 1916.

Firstly, a look at the married women who were working. Only three (8%) of the students who married were working in 1939, and only one was in an occupation that related to the class she took: Evelyn Ellen Sanford, who was a bookkeeper when she enrolled on the bookkeeping class in 1917, was running her own art needlework and wool shop in Preston, which might plausibly require bookkeeping skills. The other two married women who worked in 1939 were Elizabeth Robson and Jenetta Tungate. Elizabeth Robson had been a dressmaker then clerk, as noted earlier, but by 1939 she was working in the cotton industry as a winder. Jenetta Tungate had worked as a tracer and studied engineering drawing in 1918, but was married to a poultry farmer, and helped run the business.

Turning now to the students who did not marry, of the 22 single women found in the 1939 register, 16 (73%) were working, some of their occupations were clearly related to their courses. Seven women had worked as clerks when they enrolled during the war: four of these were still working as clerks with local government departments, the other three were not. Four worked as teachers in 1939; three of these had been teachers when they enrolled, the fourth had no occupation, but all four took classes associated with teaching: art, French, mathematics and chemistry. Six single women did not work; they had taken classes in art, music and English; with no other evidence available, one can hypothesise that they were not seeking a vocation when they studied at the Institute but were pursuing classes for pleasure or academic development.

One example of a student who appears to have had a successful career is Constance Hatfield. She was an 11-year-old schoolgirl in 1917 when she

enrolled on the Latin class, which was one of the subjects provided by the Institute for matriculation at a university. Her father was a commercial traveller for his family-owned flour milling business. She went on to gain a degree in languages and eventually worked as a translator. Another example of a student having a long-term career is Kathleen P Green, who at 17 with no occupation had joined the art day class. She later trained as a nurse, qualified as a midwife, and worked as a health visitor. Ethel Harrison, on the other hand, is an example of one whose studies in Commerce did not lead to a career in an office. Her father was a general labourer, her mother worked as a cotton weaver and Ethel too was working as a cotton weaver when she was 14.[113] At the age of 20, she was a clerk and enrolled on the Commerce course, but by 1939 she was working as a domestic servant. As far as I have been able to ascertain, only one of the 4 tracers from Ashton was working in that area in later life, and this distinctive group is studied in more details in Chapter Four.

Conclusion

The majority of the Ashton students, then, came from a pleasant suburb of Preston, from families who worked in skilled jobs, many connected to the docks and the engineering firms in the area, or who worked for themselves running small business. These men valued hard work and were committed to their own enterprises and careers. They may have aspired to the middle-class values of separation of home and work by living in the suburbs, but they were forward thinking and took the opportunities available to invest in their daughters' education and give them valuable life and vocational skills. For some, like Ethel Harrison's family, this may have been harder to achieve.

113 1911 census.

The students were mostly adolescents, aged 16 to 17, and over two thirds of them worked, mostly in clerical or office-based jobs. There were some younger and some older women, and there were a few women who worked as teachers and in factories. The majority were taking courses and classes associated with their jobs, but there were some studying to move into new careers, or for leisure or to cultivate their knowledge. Of the women who were traced in later life, 38% remained single, and two thirds of them worked. Of the married women, only 3% were working. What is interesting is that just over half of those who were working in 1939, regardless of marital status, were engaged in jobs that were related to the courses they took at the Harris Institute during the war. These women enrolled to make a difference in their lives at a time when there were emerging opportunities for women. Was the experience the same for the women in Fishwick? The next chapter will analyse the students who lived at the other end of town.

CHAPTER THREE

FEMALE STUDENTS FROM FISHWICK

This chapter will study the female students who lived in Fishwick, an area with a different character to Ashton. Fishwick is situated south-east of Preston's centre, and about half the area is made up of woods and a flood plain, concentrating the community and industry together into less than 2 square kilometres on the brow of the hill. Within this compact district, 20 cotton mills dominated the landscape. Housing was in close proximity to the mills, the largest of which were to be found on Brockholes View and New Hall Lane. Just outside Fishwick on the western edge of the boundary stood Horrockses Yard Works and Sovereign Mill, which at one time was the largest spinning factory in the world and would dominate Preston's textile industry into the 1950s.[114] Other factories in Fishwick developed to support the cotton industry and included a bobbin and shuttle makers, a brick works, gas works, a forge, bakery and a railway works.[115] Between the town's court-house and prison at one end, and the cemetery at the other, the people of Fishwick lived out their lives in this close community, connected to the heart of the town by the tramways which ran the length of Fishwick's two main roads - New Hall Lane and Ribbleton Lane. These routes were lined with terraced housing, and row on row of terraces radiated from them. Small retailers brought the area to life, supplying the needs of the community, from colonial meat, fish and fruit, clogs and boots, to newsagents, publicans and undertakers.[116] Housing could be rented for about

114 Hunt, David. *The Silent Mills - Preston and the Lancashire Cotton Famine*. (Leyland Historical Society Occasional Papers Series, ND.) Page 1, quoting A Hewitson, *A History of Preston in the County of Lancashire*, 1883.
115 National Library of Scotland. Lancashire LXI.10 (Preston) Revised 1909 published 1912. Available at maps.nls.uk/view/126517601 [Accessed 13 October 2021.]
116 Information taken from the 1911 census, for numbers 4 to 46 New Hall Lane in Fishwick.

4s 6d in 1910[117] (equivalent to £17.59[118]) for a house in Brockholes View[119] where there were new houses being built[120] with gardens and views over the Ribble valley below.[121]

The Harris Institute registers refer to this area as Preston, therefore the group of students living in Fishwick which form this study were identified by cross referencing the addresses in the class registers with the streets within Morgan's nineteenth century ward boundary, as used in the previous chapter,[122] and Figure 3.1 below shows the Fishwick ward. The concentration of the population in the northern segment can clearly be seen, and the map highlights the industrial character of the area, yet it also shows that there was a degree of separation for the families whose daughters went to the Harris Institute. Most lived on London Road and New Hall Lane. The southerly half of the area is where the terrain slopes steeply down to the river Ribble below.

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117 At the outbreak of war, average rent for a poor household was around 5 shillings a week. See Allanson, Helen M. *"Social and Economic Changes in Preston during the First World War."* Submitted for the degree of MA local history (CNAA) at Teeside Polytechnic, 1982. UCLan Reference Library [942.766509044 ALL].

118 This estimation was made using the National Archives currency convertor, and is based on equivalent prices in 2017. Available at https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/#currency-result [Accessed 29 October 2021.]

119 No Name. "To be Let." *Lancashire Evening Post* (Preston), 26 November 1910. Available at: https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19101128%2f228&stringtohighlight=rent%20fishwick [Accessed 15 October 2021.] The frequency of payments was not stated.

120 No Name. "Houses, Land, Etc, On Sale." *Lancashire Evening Post* (Preston) 6 October 1910. Available at: https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19101006%2f028&stringtohighlight=brockholes%20view [Accessed 15 October 2021.]

121 No Name. "Auction Sales." *Lancashire Evening Post* (Preston) 19 December 1910. Available at: https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19101219%2f263&stringtohighlight=brockholes%20view [Accessed 15 October 2021.]

122 Morgan (1993.) page 99.

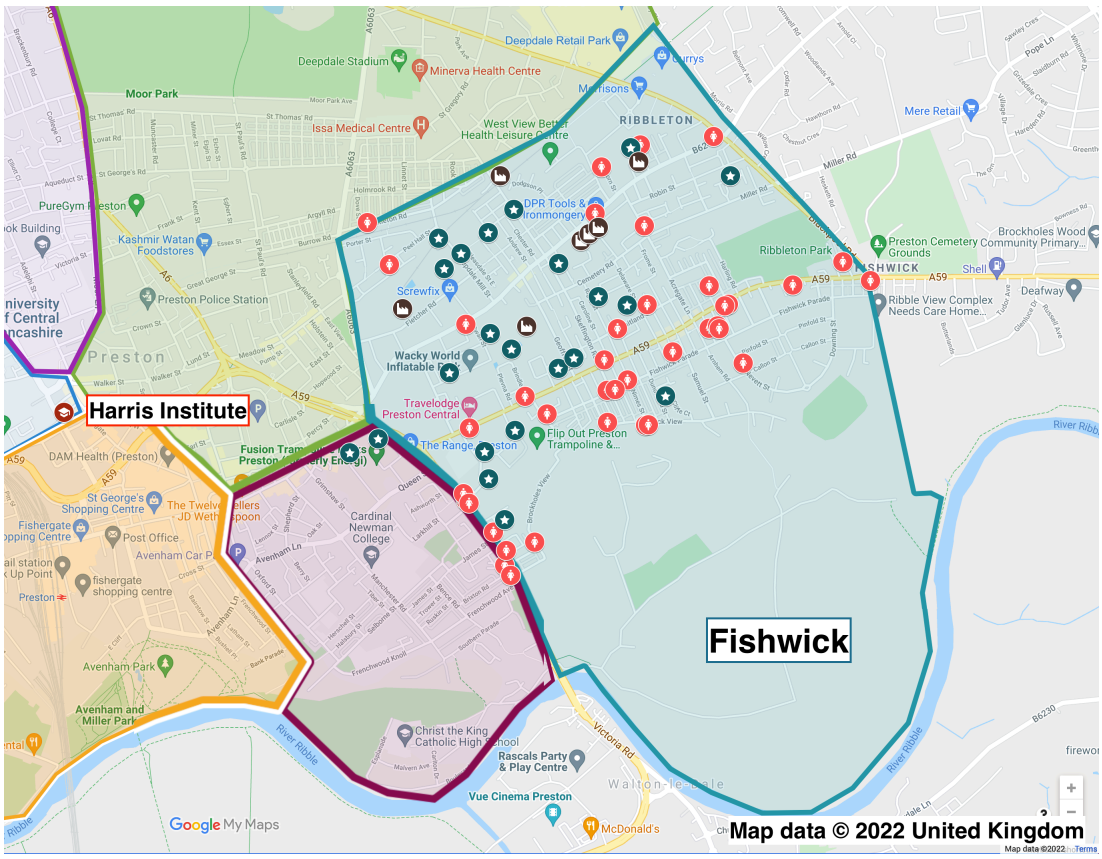

Figure 3.1. Fishwick showing the students' homes along with the industry and mills that were in operation in 1912.[123] (Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[124]

Key: Red circles show the location of the students' homes.

Green circles with a star show the location of mills.

Brown circles with a factory symbol show the location of other industry.

Fishwick Students and Family Background

41 women from Fishwick attended the Harris Institute during the First World War. Ten of these women attended in more than one year, and three (7%) took more than one class. This was slightly fewer than the cohort as a whole, where,

123 Location of mills and industry taken from online source: National Library of Scotland. Map: Lancashire LXI.10 (Preston) Revised 1909 published 1912, maps.nls.uk/view/126517601, accessed 11:10, 13 October 2021.

124 Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

as noted in Chapter One, around 9% were taking more than one class. In Ashton the figure was 13%. Female students from Fishwick made up 4% of the total female cohort, and there were 3.5 times more attending by 1918 than there had been in 1914; their numbers increased at a slightly slower pace than the Ashton students, but slightly faster than the female cohort as a whole.

As in the previous chapters, the following analyses are based on the number of enrolments, which was 58. Table 3.1 below shows the number of female student enrolments made each year at the Institute as a whole, and the number from Fishwick.

Table 3.1. Number of enrolments made by the whole female cohort, and the number made by female students from Fishwick, 1914 to 1918.

Academic year	Total number of enrolments by female students	Number of enrolments by women living in Fishwick	Percentage of female students that were from Fishwick
1914	122	6	5
1915	215	4	2
1916	299	8	3
1917	379	18	5
1918	376	22	6
Total	1,391	58	4

Table 3.1 shows that the number of women from Fishwick fluctuated throughout the period. While more women in general were attending in 1915, there were

fewer women from Fishwick who made up just 2% of the cohort. This might be attributed to opportunities for working-class women in war work such as munitions, however this possibility has not been researched as part of this study. By 1917, there was an increase in female students from Fishwick and the proportion of this group was back to the level it had been in 1914. It continued to increase, albeit slowly, in 1918.

Moving now to the student profile, the female Fishwick students were all single and aged between 13 and 50. At the start of the war, half were aged 20 to 24, but by 1918, students aged 16 to 17 were the largest group. In Table 3.2 below, the age group of the students in 1914 is compared to the age group in 1918, to show how the age profile changed during the period. Although the numbers are small, there is a clear pattern of more late-teens attending.

Table 3.2. Age of female Fishwick students in 1914 and in 1918.

Age bracket	Number in 1914	Percentage	Number in 1918	Percentage
Under 14	0	0	1	4
14-15	0	0	1	4
16-17	1	17	9	41
18-19	2	33	6	27
20-24	3	50	3	14
25-29	0	0	2	9
30+ / adult	0	0	0	0
Total	6		22	

The next section will study their family backgrounds. Firstly, a brief look into the family dynamics of the students is presented before examining the occupations of the parents and guardians as declared on the 1911 census. All but one of the families from Fishwick were found in the 1911 census. 38 (67%) of the classes, were taken by students who came from two parent families where the father was the head of the household. Eight (14%) lived in a household where their mother was the head - six of these were widows, and the other two did not live with their husbands. Nine classes (16%) were taken by students who did not live with their mother or father but with another male relative such as grandparent or uncle, for example 18-year-old Clarissa Riley's parents lived in Halifax, and Clarissa lived with her grandfather, a police pensioner. Doris Kneen's parents lived in the Isle of Man and may have been separated or deceased, and 16-year-old Doris lived with her uncle, a law clerk. 50-year-old Ellen Hunt lived with her brother, a clog maker, and Gladys May Heaton, who was 15, lived with her grandfather who worked as a ball warper in the cotton industry. 38-year-old Frances Nowell lived with her widowed father.

Taking all this into account, the occupational status of the parents or guardians has been found for 58 of the entries on the class registers. The types of occupations have been studied, but because in some households both parents worked, the total number of occupations used in this analysis is 64. Firstly, overall numbers are presented, followed by an in depth look at the types of work they were doing, and then a separate study of the working mothers. To facilitate an analysis and comparison, I have divided the occupations into the four broad categories I used in the previous chapter, but here I have added a category for miscellaneous. The categories are as follows:

Trade (small employers, shopkeepers, buying or selling goods and services),

Clerical (office work, Post Office),

Industrial (hot water fitter, cotton operatives, cabinet maker),

Professional (clergy) and

Miscellaneous (teacher, political lecturer and police pensioner).

The following Table 3.3 provides an overview of the parents' occupations based on these categories.

Table 3.3. Overview of the types of occupation in 1911 of the parents of female students from Fishwick, for class register entries made in 1914 to 1918.

Year	Industrial	Trade	Clerical	Misc	None	Professional	Total
1914	1	3	1	1			6
1915	2		1		1		4
1916	5	3					8
1917	10	6	1	2	1		21
1918	10	10	2	2	1	1	26
Total	28	22	5	5	3	1	64
Total	44%	34%	8%	8%	5%	2%	

The employment rate was high, at 95%, and the majority were in industrial occupations. The figures for trade were affected by the four households where the student's mother worked as well, assisting in family run shops (butcher, provisions, off licence). I will return to the mothers who were working later in the chapter. There were only 5 parents in clerical jobs, all men, (working in the

cotton industry, the post office and a law clerk). The 'miscellaneous' group was made up of a female teacher, a political lecturer and a police pensioner. There was only one professional, the vicar at one of Fishwick's churches. The three with no occupation were women, all widows. A closer look at the industrial workers shows that they were made up of 22 men and six women. Two thirds of this group worked in the cotton industry (15 men and three women). The men were in skilled or supervisory positions (overlooker, tape sizer, cloth looker, ball warper), the women were weavers. The other ten industrial occupations included a clog maker, bookbinder, iron moulder, hot water fitter, cabinet maker, two railway carriage examiners and a woman who worked as an upholsterer.[125] Of the 22 parents working in trade, five (23%) were women – the four mentioned earlier who worked alongside their husbands, and one woman who ran her own shop (and whose husband was a cotton cloth overlooker.) The majority of those working in trade were shopkeepers (hairdresser, general dealer, butcher, provisions, clog and boot dealers, draper.) There were also 3 commercial travellers (one selling pianos and music, one selling sewing machines, and one a travelling auctioneer). There were 2 in hospitality (an off-licence holder and his wife), two insurance agents, a cabinet maker and a shuttle maker. This group were mostly self-employed or at least autonomous in their work. Table 3.4 below shows the different trades this group were engaged in, and clearly shows the dominance of shopkeeping, particularly in 1918.

125 The upholsterer's daughter enrolled on 3 classes.

Table 3.4. Breakdown of the types of trade parents were engaged in, in 1911, for female Fishwick students who attended in 1914 to 1918.

Year	Master builder and joiner	Employer	Shop keeper	Sales	Insurance agent or collector	Hospitality	Total
1914			2	1			3
1915			0				
1916	1		2				3
1917	1	1[126]		1	1	2[127]	6
1918			6[128]	2[129]	2		10
Total	2	1	10	4	3	2	22

In the Fishwick families, 12 (26%) of the mothers worked, (compared to 3% of the Ashton mothers who worked.) Seven were married and living with their husbands who also worked. Two were married but were estranged from their husbands, and three classes were taken by a student whose mother was a widow and working. The seven married women were employed as follows: three assisted their husbands in the family business – butcher, provisions and off licence holder, three were cotton weavers whose husbands worked in industrial occupations (cabinet maker, and two railway carriage examiners), one ran her own confectionary and provisions shop (her husband worked as a cloth looker in a cotton mill.) The widow worked as an upholsterer, which had been her husbands' occupation before he died. The two women who did not live with their

126 Richard Fell Green, Shuttlemaker.
127 Includes the wife of the off-licence holder who assists in the business.
128 Includes three women in 1918 – two assisting in the family business (butcher, provisions,) and the third ran her own provisions and confectionary shop.
129 Includes a female boot dealer.

husbands both worked, one was an elementary school-teacher, the other a boot dealer. Table 3.5 below shows the occupations of the Fishwick students' mothers.

Table 3.5. The occupations in 1911 of the mothers of female Fishwick students, 1914 to 1918.

	Industrial	Trade	Clerical	Prof	Misc	Teaching	Total
1914	1					1	2
1915	1						1
1916	1						1
1917	2	1					3
1918	1	4					5
Total	6	5	0	0	0	1	12
Total	50%	42%				8%	

This table shows that half the mothers worked in industrial occupations (three weavers, three upholsterers), and 42% were employed in trade. It also highlights that the mothers' work was not as varied as the fathers'. Three quarters of the trades occupying the working mothers could be carried out at home, which would enable them to balance work life with domestic duties and looking after dependents. The three weavers, the teacher (and possibly the upholsterer) presumably left the home to go to a place of work.

In sum, the Fishwick students lived in an industrial area dominated by cotton mills, and 95% of the parents worked, mostly in industrial jobs and occupations connected to trade. Just over a quarter of the mothers worked. 1917 and 1918

saw an increase in younger students who came from industrial and trade families. These families were hardworking and investing in their daughters' education, however it is also plausible that the students were supporting themselves, as the majority were in paid work, and the next section will examine the occupations of the students.

Fishwick Student Occupations and Studies

51 of the 58 classes (88%) were taken by students in paid occupations in the five-year period. 65% of those working, were employed in office-based jobs, and 16% in the cotton industry. The remainder worked in teaching, sewing, shop and factory work. Table 3.6, below, shows the occupations of the students. The 'other' occupations were shop assistants and dressmakers.

Table 3.6. The occupations of the female students from Fishwick, 1914 to 1918.

Year	None	Clerical	Teaching	Factory	Cotton factory	Other	Total
1914	1	2	2	0	1	0	6
1915	0	2	0	1	1	0	4
1916	1	4	1	0	1	1	8
1917	1	10	0	1	3	3	18
1918	4	15	0	0	2	1	22
Total	7	33	3	2	8	5	58
Total	12%	57%	5%	3%	14%	9%	

In 1914, 83% of the Fishwick students worked, and by 1918, 82% worked. When looking at their occupations in each separate year of the war, it is again

striking, as it was in Ashton, to see the scale of the increase in clerical workers. In an area dominated by the cotton industry, the students were moving into new areas of office work. In Fishwick, there was a comparatively large increase in the period of women with no occupation taking classes, although the numbers were still low. The classes and courses they enrolled on are discussed in the next section, which will also consider the reasons for studying certain classes, and the extent to which Fishwick women were taking advantage of new opportunities created by the war.

As noted previously, the Institute offered organised courses or individual classes. Of the 58 entries on the registers, 21 (36%) were organised classes, meaning over two thirds of the students were taking the more costly option of individual classes. As most were in work, time may have been a factor in choosing the most suitable type of course for the student. And as noted above, only three students took more than one class. Table 3.7 overleaf shows the different subjects the students were taking, and the table is organised into categories, as in the previous chapter. This shows that the Fishwick students were predominantly enrolled on clerical classes, and the rate of increase in these subjects in the last two years stands out. Two thirds of those studying clerical subjects worked in the clerical sector, but there were also 5 cotton operatives, two shop assistants, a booksewer, a dressmaker, a factory worker, and 3 with no occupation - evidence that women from different occupations and none were taking classes that would equip them to get a job in an office.

Table 3.7. Number of classes and courses taken in each subject by women from Fishwick, 1914 to 1918.

Class subject area	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total	% of total students
Clerical	2	3	4	10	20	39	67
Music		1	2	2	1	6	10
Foreign languages			1	4		5	9
Art	1		1		1	3	5
English	2					2	3.5
Technical[130]				2		2	3
Mathematics	1					1	1.5
Science							
Total	6	4	8	18	22	58	

Music and modern languages were the next most popular classes, an indication that women were plausibly taking classes for pleasure. Music was studied by two clerks, two cotton operatives and two with no occupation. Modern languages were taken by a dressmaker, a shop assistant and two clerks. There were three students taking art – two teachers, and one with no occupation. There were two taking English, a weaver, and one with no occupation; there was one taking mathematics, who worked as a teacher. No one was taking a science subject, and only two technical classes, in cotton weaving, were taken towards the end of the period – and they were both clerks. There is evidence of students taking classes in areas other than their own occupation, which might

[130] These technical classes were in cotton weaving.

indicate that they were training for a new kind of job. Florence Beesley is one example – she worked as a mica blocker,[131] and studied bookkeeping in 1915. She enrolled again in 1917, her job was now clerk, but she was studying cotton weaving. For Florence, it would appear her course helped her move from factory work to office work. That she then studied cotton weaving might indicate that office work didn't suit her and she wanted to move into cotton weaving, or she may have been a clerk in a mill and wanted to understand the industry. We can't know her motives, but she appears to see education as a worthwhile means to changing career. Five of the eight cotton operatives were taking clerical subjects indicating a desire to change occupation, but the other three were studying English and music, possibly to improve their basic education. The dressmaker studied French in 1916, and shorthand in 1917; two shop assistants took bookkeeping, which is a useful skill in shop work, but one also took a class in French. The three teachers took art and mathematics, which could plausibly be connected to their profession.

In sum, just over half the students were studying courses related to their work at that time. The classes taken, and the relationship to their occupation, would appear to indicate a degree of wanting change or personal development. Some may have been keen to take advantage of the new opportunities in clerical work created by the war. Following the women's post war stories sheds some light on whether they were still working in the subject areas they had studied at the Harris Institute.

[131] Mica is a mineral that was processed and used as an insulating material in the UK's first electric trams by Attwater and Sons in Preston from 1885 to 1925. Source: www.attwater.com [Accessed 27 January 2022.]

Future Careers

This next section will analyse the circumstances of the Fishwick students later in life by using the 1939 Register, which as noted previously, provides some biographical information taken on the eve of the Second World War. Seven former students could not be found and two of the students were deceased by 1939. This leaves 32 students to explore in detail how they were occupied. Firstly, a look at their marital status reveals that 21 were married, and 11 were single. Of the 21 married women, only three were working, as follows: one cotton weaver (who had been a clerk during the war taking the Commerce class), one grocer (who had no occupation when she studied Commerce) and one worked as an attendant at the Poor Law Institution at Sharoe Green (she had been a shop assistant and studied bookkeeping). 18 married women didn't work and many of them were raising school age children. In contrast, there were only two single women who did not work, and one of these was incapacitated. The nine working women who were single were employed as follows: two clerks (neither had office jobs during the war, and both studied clerical classes), three cotton operatives (two had studied Commerce and one music), a mental nurse (who had worked as a clerk and studied Commerce), a schoolmistress (who was a teacher when she studied mathematics), a sewing machinist (who had worked as a cotton weaver and studied English) and finally a tracer in engineering. This evidence shows that only five of the former students were employed in the same type of area as the class taken. More than half the students who had pursued a clerical course at the Institute were already working in the clerical sector, but by 1939, only 2 worked in the clerical sector. The student who appears to have had the most successful career was Lilian Kathleen Marie Rees. She was the daughter of the Vicar at St Matthews

Church. Her father's profession indicates a higher social group than most of the students from Fishwick. Previously educated by a governess, she attended the Harris Institute in 1918, when she was 16 years old. She did not have a paid occupation, and she enrolled to study art in the day class, which might have been to gain what Purvis describes as "ornamental knowledge."[132] However, as was noted previously, the art school was for students serious about working in that field. This subject may appear ornamental, but Rees was serious about developing her talent for use in a career: by 1939, she was a leading tracer with the Ministry of Aviation in Farnborough, and was mentioned in the London Gazette in 1962 on her retirement.[133] Her story touches on two points that affected women's opportunities to pursue careers: their social status and their marital status. Lilian was the only one from this area to come from a professional family but was one of the few who had a good career; her social status appears to have given her an advantage over her fellow students. Additionally, she did not stay at home, get married, and have children, like her mother; instead, she remained single and was very successful in her chosen field. To pursue the question of inter-generational changes in opportunities for women to work a little further, the next section compares the former Fishwick students' situation in 1939 with that of their mothers in 1911. This is a useful way to compare the status of women over two generations, because they were almost the same age in the two sources used.[134] However, just to note here, that this exercise was not carried out for the Ashton students, because of the low number of mothers who worked. The figures in Table 3.8, below, are based

132 Purvis (1989) page 72.
133 Second Supplement to The London Gazette of Tuesday, 23 October 1962, Issue 42817, page 8351. Available at: https://www.thegazette.co.uk/London/issue/42817/supplement/8351 [Accessed 28 January 2022.]
134 For example, Florrie Hutton was 38 in 1939, her mother was 32 in 1911. Lilian Eaton was 47 in 1939, her mother was 50 in 1911.

on the number of individuals from Fishwick and their mothers (rather than the number of enrolments.)

Table 3.8. Showing the status of the Fishwick students' mothers in 1911 and the status of former Fishwick students in 1939.

Status	1911: the students' mothers, total of 36 women.	1939: former Institute students, total 32 women.
Married	33 (92%)	21 (66%)
Unmarried	0	11 (34%)
Widows	3 (8%)	0
Don't work	26 (72%)	20 (62%)
Work	10 (28%)	12 (38%)
Married and work	9 (25%)	3 (14%)
Unmarried and work	1 (3%)	9 (82%)

This shows that all the women in the 1911 group (who were the mothers of the Fishwick students) were married or had been, (which is not altogether surprising), but 66% of the Fishwick students were married by 1939. Just 25% of the 1911 women were married and working, and by 1939, only 14% were married and working. For some this may have been a choice between marriage and children or a career, or maybe they didn't marry because of a shortage of men following the war, but from these samples, the figures suggest that marriage was a bar to working in 1911, and this hadn't changed in 1939. While

there appears to be a clearer distinction between marriage and work, the age of the children complicates the issue.

Conclusion

Fishwick was an area that developed with the growth of the cotton industry. Its many mills dominated the landscape yet most of the students' homes were slightly removed and concentrated on the southern edge of the area where new, better quality houses were being built.[135] The students from Fishwick were a small minority of the whole female cohort, but their numbers increased towards the end of the war. They got younger, from a majority of 20- to 24-year-olds in 1914, most were aged 16- to 17-years old by 1918. From families that relied on the cotton industry and trade for their income, their daughters were moving away from these occupations into new areas of office work, and seeking training in classes and courses that reflected this. Only one fifth were in the same line of business as their parents, and 22% of the Fishwick women who were clerks[136] had previously worked in a factory. 67% took clerical subjects, but the next most popular class was music, which may indicate that some of the women had money to spend on pursuing leisure activities rather than just paying for classes for vocational reasons. The Fishwick students were increasingly taking advantage of opportunities during the war to work in clerical posts and take vocational classes to improve their situation, but after the war, only 16% were still working in the area in which they had trained. Choice or lack of opportunity meant that very few succeeded in the career aspirations they displayed in 1914 to 1918. There are noticeable differences and similarities between the Ashton and the Fishwick students, which will be discussed further in the conclusion.

135 Morgan (1993) page 100 and page 103.
136 18 clerks from Fishwick, 8 had worked in a different industry before, 4 of them in factories.

CHAPTER FOUR
INDIVIDUAL CLASSES

This chapter considers the type of female students who enrolled on individual evening classes who, as previously stated, made up over half the female cohort during the war. Before proceeding, a brief reminder of the way the Institute delivered its evening programme. The Harris Institute Council arranged evening classes and courses through the various Schools "to provide systematic instruction in the scientific principles applicable to the leading trades and industries of Preston and the District."[137] These classes covered a wide variety of academic and technical subjects related to local industry, and were delivered either as an organised course of three evenings a week, or as individual classes, each one taking place once a week. The majority of these classes were aimed at men who were employed during the day, but as has been shown in the previous chapters, women attended in increasing numbers. In order to investigate who these women were, this chapter will take the same format as the previous two, but in addition will look specifically at two classes that are particularly interesting due to their distinct difference to the rest of the classes – the art day class and the technical classes. A comparison of the female students who enrolled in 1914 and in 1918 is presented, based on the evidence in the registers. The family background of a sample of female students has been examined using supplementary sources, and a sample of students is researched later in life using the 1939 Register to see if there is any evidence that their classes had any lasting effect on their future careers.

137 HI Prospectus 1915/16 Session, page 93.

Individual Class Students and Family Background

In September 1914, the registers show that a total of 122 enrolments were made by the female students. 100 (84%) of these were made on individual classes, the remainder enrolled on organised or unspecified courses.[138] By 1918, 376 enrolments were made, just over three times as many as in 1914. Although there was a significant increase in the number of women who were taking organised courses, which had risen from 16% to 42%, individual classes were still preferred by more than half the female students, indicating the importance of this mode of study to women students, as shown in Table 4.1 below.

Table 4.1. Comparing numbers of all female enrolments in 1914 with 1918, and the types of course.[139]

	Total number of female enrolments	Individual classes	Organised course	Don't know the type of course
1914	122	100 (83%)	19 (16%)	3
1918	376	215 (57%)	159 (42%)	2

One of the individual classes offered was an art day class. Because this class took place during the day, it is expected that the women enrolling were not working. They therefore form a distinctive cohort which is studied in a separate section at the end of this chapter. Removing the women taking the art day class from the numbers in Table 4.1 above, means that the following study is based on female enrolments on individual classes as follows:

138 Information about the class was not completed on the register for two student entries.
139 Includes the art day class.

1914: 87 enrolments

1918: 198 enrolments

Turning now to examine where this group of students lived. Although most of the students lived in Preston, a number attended from the surrounding areas, and in 1914, there was a small number who lived up to 11 miles away. This is in contrast to the findings presented in Chapter One, which showed the location of the homes of the students who took the organised Commerce course. The catchment area of the Commerce course students in 1914 was smaller. This indicates that students from further afield were more likely to travel to Preston for individual classes for one night a week, than travel in three nights week. However, by 1918, the catchment area for both individual class and organised course students was similar. Figures 4.1 and 4.2 below show the locations of the individual class students' homes in 1914 and in 1918. These maps show clearly the distance that some students travelled to get to the Institute, and also the concentration of students living in the town centre. The different coloured circles represent the different subjects they were taking and a key to both maps is shown underneath Figure 4.1. Using the maps this way to show the different subjects being taken, indicates the variety in the type of class, and hints at the difference in the two years being studied. The subject classes will be studied in more detail later in the chapter.

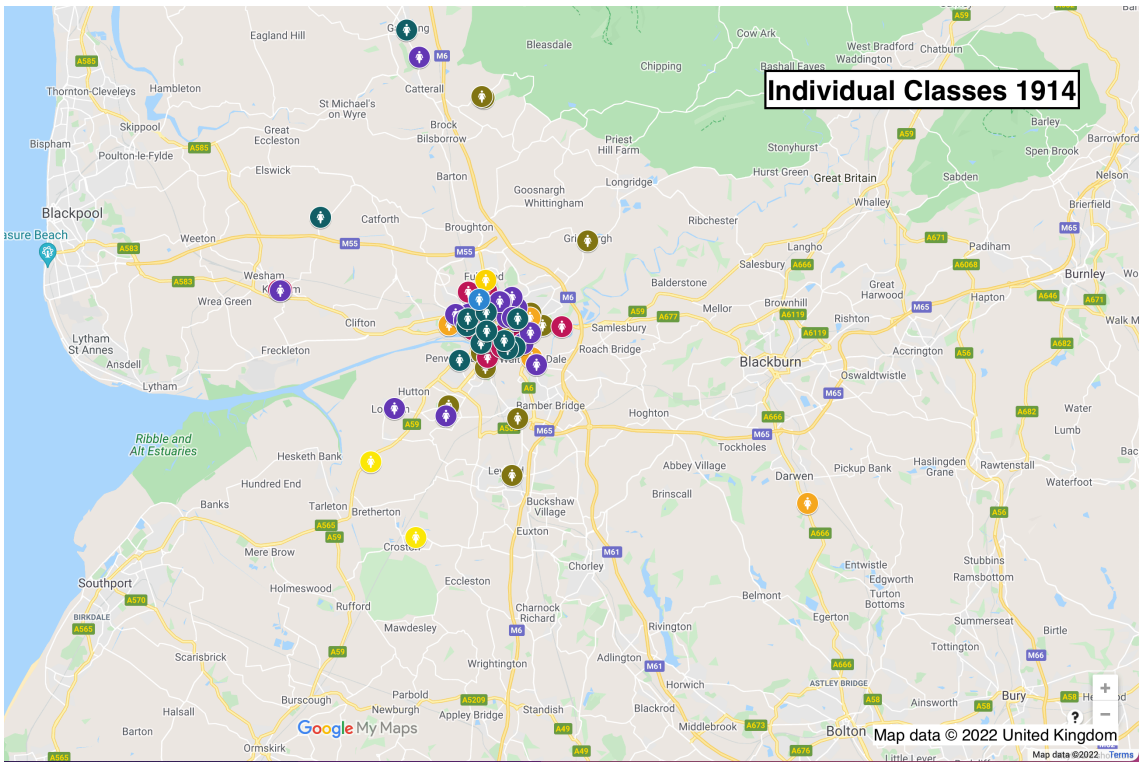

Figure 4.1. Location of individual class students' homes in 1914, marked with coloured circles which denote the subject taken (see key below.)

(Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[140]

Key to the colours used:

Khaki	Clerical subjects
Yellow	Sciences
Dark green	Music theory
Dark pink	Art evening
Orange	Mathematics
Dark blue	Engineering
Purple	Foreign languages
Pale blue	Class not stated

[140] Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_l09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

Figure 4.2. Location of individual class students' homes in 1918.[141] (Map Source: Google MyMaps. Map data © 2022 United Kingdom.)[142]

Figures 4.1 and 4.2 above show that women were travelling some distance in the evenings to attend classes, and the increase in students taking clerical subjects is hinted at by the abundance of number of khaki coloured circles. Moving now to their ages, we see that they varied greatly. In 1914, the youngest students were 11, the oldest 44. In 1918, the youngest students were 13, the oldest over 50.[143]

Table 4.2 below shows the ages of the female students taking individual classes in 1914 and in 1918. The majority of students enrolling in 1914 were aged

141 Attribution: Map Dated © 2022 United Kingdom. Created in 'Google MyMaps' by the author in 2021/22. They can be viewed online at: https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_I09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

142 Google maps, adapted by the author in 2021/22. https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/0/edit?hl=en&mid=1i-IFLhew2TBAk94AakJR-BCEVIjU_I09&ll=53.75887107109076%2C-2.6459226999999874&z=10 Last accessed 28-1-2022.

143 There were three students over 50. One of these, Lillie Marsden, stated on the register that she was 34 years old, but information taken from the 1911 census indicates that she was probably in her 50s. This may have been a transcription error. I have used the transcription for this dissertation.

between 20 and 24 (29%), with 16- to 17-year-olds the next biggest group (21%). By 1918, most were aged 16 to 17 (24%), with 20- to 24-year-olds the next largest group (20%).

Table 4.2. Ages of the female students enrolled on individual classes in 1914 and in 1918.[144]

Age	1914	%	1918	%
Under 14	7	8	7	4
14 - 15	5	6	24	12
16 - 17	18	21	47	24
18 - 19	11	13	31	16
20 - 24	25	29	40	20
25 - 29	12	14	20	10
30+	9	19	29	15
Total	87		198	

The biggest change from 1914 to 1918 was the increase in teenage students and the decrease in those over 20. Most of the students were single, but there was one married woman in 1914, a 42-year-old teacher, and there were four in 1918, aged between 37 and 50, two teachers, and two with no occupation. The married women, then, made up 11% in 1914 and 20% in 1918, showing that a greater proportion of the students were married in 1918.

The next section will explore the backgrounds of the students to see what type of families they came from, using their parents' occupation taken from the 1911

144 Does not include art day class.

census, as in the previous chapters. Because of the large number of students taking this type of class, a sample has been made, made up of 48 (55%) of the 1914 cohort, and 107 (54%) of the 1918 cohort. A selection was made by placing the names of the students in alphabetical order and then eliminating every other name from the list. However, where the family could not be found in the 1911 census, an alternative student was chosen, usually the next one on the list. Before proceeding to the occupations, there follows a brief look at the family dynamic of the students. In 1914, the father was the head of the household in 85% of the families. The mother was the head in just 4% of the families, they were all widows. The majority of students lived with their parents or siblings, and one student lived independently as a boarder. Of the 1918 cohort, 81% of the students lived in a family where the father was the head of the household, and 10% where the mother was the head (of these, only one was not a widow). Most of the students lived with their parents or siblings; three students were self-supporting, and three students were married in 1911. One student, Mary Whitehead had lost both parents, and as a 9-year-old in 1911, was resident at St Joseph's orphanage in Preston. Other than Mary Whitehead, all the 1914 and the 1918 students came from households where there was income from either their parents' employment, their own and their siblings, or their husband.

To ascertain the family background of this sample of students, the occupations of the main breadwinners of the households in which they lived in 1911 have been analysed and placed into the five broad categories used in previous chapters, as follows:

Trade (small employers, shopkeepers, buying or selling goods and services),
Clerical (office work, insurance clerk, railway),
Industrial (farmers, cotton operatives, tailor),
Professional (land agent, head teachers) and
Miscellaneous (butler, architects assistant, money lender, police detective inspector)

The following Table 4.3 provides an overview of the occupations regarding students who enrolled in 1914 and in 1918. In some households, the student's mother worked as well – two in 1914 (4%), and 13 households in 1918 (12%). The following section is a more in-depth study of each occupational category.

The majority of students came from families that in 1911 were engaged in industrial occupations, and this did not change in the two years being studied here. In 1914, most worked in the cotton industry and farming (19% each), the others included a boot maker, dock labourer, iron turner, blacksmith, tailor. Two thirds of the men were in managerial or supervisory roles (such as brick works manager) or working on their own account (such as farmer or tailor); there were just two women and they worked as a farmer and an upholsterer. By 1918, 36% of the parents worked in the cotton industry including five women. Farmers made up 16% (made up of six men and two women). The other industrial occupations had expanded to include engineering, the railway, house painter and carter.

Table 4.3. Breakdown of types of occupation of heads of households including spouses in 1911, for class register entries in 1914 and 1918.

Occupation	1914	%	1918	%	Total	%
Industrial	21[145]	44	51[146]	48	72	46
Trade	14[147]	29	36[148]	34	50	32
Clerical	7	15	11[149]	10	18	12
Miscellaneous	0		7[150]	7	7	5
Professional	4	8	2	2	6	4
Unemployed/ Retired	2[151]	4	0		2	1
Total	48		107[152]		155	

In sum, the most popular industrial occupations were in the cotton industry and farming in both 1914 and 1918, but while they were in equal numbers in the 1914 cohort, by 1918 there were more cotton workers than farmers. The number of mothers who worked had increased from 11% in 1914 to 16% in 1918.

Trade was the next largest type of employment among the parents in both years. In 1914, 79% worked on their own account as shopkeepers and dealers, one of whom was a woman. The others in this category were a retired insurance agent, and two shop managers. By 1918, 64% worked as

145 Includes two mothers (one farmer, one upholsterer).
146 Includes seven mothers (five cotton workers, 2 farmers).
147 Includes one mother.
148 Includes ten mothers.
149 Includes one mother.
150 Includes one mother.
151 One unemployed tailor, one retired insurance agent.
152 This figure includes 14 families where both parents work.

shopkeepers, merchants and dealers, 22% of these were women. There were also joiners (employers), insurance agents, licensed victuallers, a photographer and an auctioneer. Shopkeepers, then, were the largest group under the category of 'trade' in both years, but there were slightly fewer in 1918 when there was a wider variety of traders to be found. The number of students' mother who worked in this category increased from 9% in 1914 to 22% in 1918.

The seven clerical occupations in 1914 included a railway telegraph 'clerk in charge', and an HM Customs Prevention Officer, and were all male. By 1918, the 11 clerical workers included one woman (a sub post mistress) and her presence was just 9% of the clerical workers. The men were employed at the Borough Council, County Council, HM Customs, and the National Telephone Company Limited. There were no occupations falling under 'miscellaneous' in 1914, but by 1918, there were 7, only one of whom was a woman who ran a servants' agency. The men worked as a financier (money lender[153]), stock and share broker, police detective inspector, police sergeant, architects' assistant, and a butler. The number of students from professional families halved by 1918. In 1914, there were 2 headteachers, a teacher at the Harris Institute and a land agent. By 1918, there were two clergy. All the parents in the professional category were male. The students, then, came from a majority of families employed in industrial types of occupation. Along with trade and miscellaneous families, their numbers increased in the period, but students from clerical and professional families decreased. The number of students whose mother worked

153 Hilda Price's father was "Preston's most lenient money lender" according to a report in the local newspaper. Source: No Name. "Laughter in the Box – Solicitor and Client at Preston." *Lancashire Evening Post* (Preston), 22 October 1907. Available at https://search.findmypast.co.uk/bna/viewarticle?id=bl%2f0000711%2f19071022%2f134&stringtohighlight=price. [Accessed 28 January 2022]

increased from 7% in 1914 to 23% in 1918. These women worked mostly in manual occupations in 1914, but by 1918, most worked in trade.

Student Occupations and Studies

The next section examines the students' own occupations to see how they changed in the period. However, not all the students worked. In 1914, the number not in paid employment was 36 (41%), but by 1918, this proportion had reduced significantly to 33 women (17%). The women who did work were occupied in a variety of occupations, such as clerical (office-based jobs including the Post Office), teaching, cotton industry, factory work (such as rubber worker), and some miscellaneous occupations, such as laundry manager or the sewing trades which appear in Table 4.4 below as 'other.' Table 4.4 provides an overview of students' occupations in the categories used in the previous chapters.

The biggest increase by 1918 was in the number of clerical workers who made up nearly half the cohort, and they replaced teachers as the most popular occupation. The biggest decrease by 1918 was in the number of women with no occupation, but also the number of teachers and cotton workers reduced by 1918. There were small increases in the number of factory workers, who were engaged in a wider variety work in 1918; they now included a Christmas Card printer, a Mica gauger, a munitions worker, rubber workers and some women

Table 4.4. The types of occupations of the women students who were taking individual classes in 1914 and in 1918.

Occupation	1914	%	1918	%
None	36	41	33	17
Clerical	15	17	83	42
Teaching	26	30	39	20
Cotton	6	7	8	4
Factory	2[154]	2	16[155]	8
'Other'	2[156]	2	19[157]	10
Total	87		198	

working in engineering as tracers (a skilled job in the drawing office of an engineering firm also mentioned in Chapter Two.[158]) The first tracers appear on the registers in 1915, and they will be studied in more detail in a separate section later in the chapter which examines the students working in this type of non-traditional occupation. There was a widening of 'other' or miscellaneous occupations, which in 1914 were limited to the sewing trades (milliner and dressmaker) but by 1918 included two photograph retouchers, 2 dispensers, 2 gardeners, a laundry manager, two shop assistants, and 8 women working in tailoring, millinery and dressmaking. As the number of students increased during the war, their occupations changed. In 1914, 41% did not work, but those who did were mostly teachers, or in clerical work. By 1918, 83% were working,

154 Two machinists (textile trade).
155 Including Christmas card printer, mica gauger, munitions worker, rubber workers, slipper clicker, slipper machinist, tracers.
156 Two in sewing trades as a milliner and a dressmaker.
157 Two photograph retouchers, 2 dispensers, 2 gardeners, a laundry manager, two shop assistants, two hotel cleaners and 8 women working in tailoring, millinery and dressmaking.
158 The job of tracer involved tracing an engineering drawing manually in ink onto linen. Information from *Blog at the Ballast* at http://ballastblog.blogspot.com/2018/05/women-working-in-industry-female-tracers.html [Accessed 24 September 2021.]

and most were in office-based jobs, and the remainder were engaged in a wider variety of occupation.

Turning now to the subjects the students were studying, this next section will look for evidence of a connection between subject classes and occupations, and whether there is evidence of intention to change career. The following analysis is based on the enrolments made by full cohort of female 'individual class' students from information in the class registers, when 87 enrolments were made in 1914, 198 enrolments were made in 1918, as shown in Table 4.5 below. The art day class has not been included in this part of the study, because the fact it took place during the day suggests the participants were not engaged in paid work. Instead, the art day class students are studied in a section later in the chapter.

At the start of the war, the subjects taken were art, music theory, foreign languages (French, German and Latin), science (experimental mechanics and physics, and botany), English, mathematics, bookkeeping and shorthand. Most of these subjects are academic in nature, and fit well with careers in teaching, but could equally be taken for self-improvement or for interest. The most popular subject in 1914 was the art evening class which took 23% of the enrolments. Just over half of these students worked as teachers during the day, while a quarter of those attending this class did not work; the other art evening class students worked in office jobs, the sewing trade or in a factory.

Table 4.5. Number of enrolments made by students in each type of individual class, not including the art day class, comparing 1914 and 1918.

Individual classes by category	1914	Percentage	1918	Percentage
Clerical	17	19	91	45
Foreign languages	17	19	34	17
Art evening	20	23	30	15
Music theory	14	16	20	10
Technical	0		4	2
Science	4	5	11	6
Mathematics	4	5	1	1
English	9	10	7	3
Total	87		198	

Clerical subjects (in bookkeeping and shorthand) attracted 19% of the enrolments – two thirds of these students already worked in office-based jobs, the rest had no occupation – indicating they were looking to gain skills for employment in the clerical field. The same number enrolled in foreign languages, and almost half of these students did not work, the rest were teachers apart from two office workers. Only three of the music theory students worked (a weaver, a machinist and a teacher). English was taken by 5 cotton weavers and 5 with no occupation. Science and mathematics were taken by students who worked as teachers or had no occupation.

By 1918, the list of clerical subjects had expanded to include commercial correspondence and typewriting, and most (46%) of the students were taking clerical subjects. The majority (71%) of these women worked in office-based jobs. Ten students had no job, making up about 10% of the group, the remainder worked in the traditional female trades of factory work, sewing trades or as shop assistants. Slightly fewer students took foreign languages in 1918, again mostly in French but which also included Esperanto and Italian, and almost half of these students worked as teachers, the rest in clerical jobs, sewing trades, factory or no occupation. The art evening class, which had been the most popular in 1914, attracted only 15% of the enrolments in 1918. Most of these students were teachers, there were a few factory workers, or those employed in sewing trades or clerical jobs and a sizeable number had no occupation. Music was taken by just 10% of the 1918 students, and was popular with cotton factory workers, who made up almost a quarter of the enrolments. The rest were made up of a mix of clerical workers, teachers, factory workers and traditional sewing trades and 29% had no occupation. Science subjects increased only slightly in the two years compared here but a new subject appeared in 1918 - engineering drawing, which will be explored shortly.

Before proceeding to a study on the female students taking technical subjects, there follows a look at the correlation between the subject class and the students' occupation to explore changes and continuities. Almost half the 1914 cohort did not work, and most of these students were taking classes in art and music, with a few pursuing clerical or academic subjects, indicating a more general interest in studying. 37% of the 1914 enrolments were taken by

students who were working in occupations that appear to be related to the class taken, and they were either teachers or office workers. 14% were taking a class that didn't obviously relate to the class, and most of them were factory workers taking English classes, suggesting they were improving their basic education, rather than pursuing vocational training.

By 1918, only 17% had no occupation, three quarters of these studied art, foreign languages and music, but a quarter studied clerical subjects, indicating a desire to learn new work skills. 83% worked, and around two thirds of these were taking classes that appear to relate to their occupations; just over half of these worked in office jobs, a third in teaching, and the rest in factory or traditional female trades. However, there was an element of the working students who were taking classes that did not obviously relate to their classes: office workers were studying languages, art and music; cotton operatives were taking music and clerical subjects; those working in other types of factory jobs took clerical subjects and a variety of academic classes; and half those working in the traditional trades were taking clerical subjects, the rest taking languages and music. In sum, the number of students who worked increased from 59% in 1914 to 83% in 1918. In 1914, a third of the students were taking classes connected to their jobs, and they were teachers or office workers. By 1918, two thirds were taking classes related to their jobs, which had expanded to include factory workers and those in the sewing trades and shops. There was an element of students taking classes *not* related to their occupations in both years, but there were more in 1914, than in 1918. The 1914 group were taking classes in English, music and art, with little evidence of seeking a change of occupation. By 1918, music, foreign languages and art were taken and there

was also evidence of cotton factory workers and those working traditional trades taking clerical subjects, indicating a desire to change job, however, it also shows that studying for vocational, academic or leisure reasons was just as important as gaining skills to change occupation.

Moving now to an emerging new cohort of women taking classes in mechanical engineering, engineering drawing, engineering weaving, machine construction, magnetism and electricity, and electrical engineering. They are worth studying because they are not taking the traditional classes in art, clerical, music or languages, that most of the other female students were taking. Instead, they enrolled on classes in the Technical School that were traditionally taken by men. Over the course of the war, seventeen individual female students enrolled on 21 classes in these subjects. Because they are a small number, this study looks at the students in all five years of the war. The first women to take these 'non-traditional' technical subjects appear in 1915, when three women enrolled on the machine construction class. Their numbers remained low in the subsequent years, but by 1918, they had more than doubled. Table 4.6 below shows the number of enrolments in each year.

Engineering Drawing provided a general introduction to the drawing of engineering details, such as detailed sketches of machine parts.[159] This class was the most popular of the technical subjects and saw enrolments increase each year. It was taken by 5 tracers, a teacher and one student with no occupation. Machine construction saw the most enrolments in 1915, but the

[159] HI Prospectus 1915/16, page 148.

numbers reduced to nil by 1917. The students in this class worked as tracers, and one

Table 4.6. Number of enrolments made by female students on each type of technical class, 1914 to 1918.

Class	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total
Engineering drawing			1	2	4	7
Machine construction		3	1			4
Mechanical engineering			1	1	2	4
Magnetism and electricity			3			3
Electrical engineering				2		2
Engineering weaving					1	1
Total	0	3	6	5	7	21

was a telephonist. Mechanical engineering had increased by 1918, taken by students who all worked – three tracers and one clerk. The only enrolments on magnetism and electricity were in 1916, made by students who worked as a telegraphist, a telephonist and a clerk with the general post office. The two electrical engineering students were a tracer and one with no occupation. The student taking engineering weaving was a tracer.

The ages of these students ranged from 14 to over 30, but in 1916, most were aged 20 to 24, and by 1918, most were aged 16-17, as shown in the Table 4.7 below.

Table 4.7. Age of female students enrolled on technical subjects, 1914 to 1918.

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total
Under 14						
14-15				2	1	3
16-17		1	1	1	5	8
18-19			1	1		2
20-24		2	4			6
25-29				1		1
30+					1	1
Total		3	6	5	7	21

Most of these students were working, only one was not (and one students' occupation was not given in the registers.) The majority (62%) worked as tracers, there were three telephonists/telegraphists, two clerks and one teacher. Table 4.8 below shows their occupations and the years they attended.

Table 4.8. Occupation of the female students enrolled on technical subjects, 1914 to 1918.

	1914	1915	1916	1917	1918	Total
Tracer		2	2	3	6	13
Telephonist		1	2			3
Clerk			2			2
Teacher					1	1
No occupation				1		1
Occupation not given				1		1
Total		3	6	5	7	21

The majority of these students came from families that worked in manual occupations, such as boot repairs, brassfinisher, iron moulder, turbine engine fitter. However, there was one student whose father was a butler, one whose father was a manufacturer, and one student's father was a photographer. Five of the mothers worked – a cotton warper, one ran a servant's agency, and one ran a tobacconist shop.

In sum, most of the students of the technical subjects had been in their early twenties in 1916, but by 1918, the majority were slightly younger. 62% worked in engineering as tracers with 14% as telephonists or telegraphists. Although most of these students worked as tracers, they were taking a variety of classes. A third of the enrolments were in engineering drawing, with mechanical engineering the next most popular taking 19% of the enrolments. Most (64%) of

their parents worked in manual jobs, but there were a few who worked in a variety of other areas. 24% of the students' mothers worked, mostly in trade. The students appear to be taking classes that were connected to their work, with only three (14%) not obviously working in the same kind of occupation as the subject taken. Although the numbers are small, they indicate that women were moving into new areas of work and were training to gain skills in their jobs.

Moving now to another discreet cohort, the students who attended the art day class. This section will study those who attended in 1914 and 1918 only. The Harris Institute's School of Art ran evening and day classes aimed at students who wished to train to become art teachers in secondary school or schools of art, and for those already working in occupations in the world of art and design. The art classes were for people who wanted to study art either as part of their own basic education, or who were intentional about studying it in order to become professional painters and sculptors, however, it was also willing to accommodate students as part of their general education.[160]

The art day class in both 1914 and in 1918 was small (just 14 students and 15 respectively). It was overwhelmingly attended by women, with just one man enrolling in each of those years. In 1914, the women ranged in age from 10 to 26, with the majority in the 20 to 24 age group. By 1918, most of the art day class students were aged 16 to 17 but the age range was wider, with the youngest being 15 and the oldest 46. There were only 2 women who were not single and both attended in 1918, Mrs Dorothy Bentham who was 29 and Mrs Constance Badger, 36, who had been widowed since 1901. The oldest art day

160 HI Prospectus 1914/15, page 73.

class student in 1918 was Patti Mayor, the well-known Preston artist and suffragette. The women who made up the clientele of the art day class were generally not in paid work. In 1914, only one woman worked, as an art pupil teacher at the Institute's School of Art. By 1918, only 2 women worked – one an artist and one a shorthand typist, which meant that 93% did not work in 1914 compared to 87% who did not work in 1918.

The fathers of the 1914 art day class students were all employed. There were three in trade (as merchants and a hotel proprietor), one farmer, an organist and nine professionals, (2 solicitors, 2 manufacturers, an accountant, 1 clergy, a retired Colonel and the Secretary of the Royal Lancashire Show) indicating that 64% of the students came from professional families. Two of the 1914 students' mothers worked (the wife of the hotel proprietor helped run the business, and the accountant's wife worked as an elementary school teacher.) By 1918, the number of professionals had reduced to 6, or 40% of the families, (2 solicitors, 2 land agents, one clergy and a cotton manufacturer.) The number employed in trade had doubled to 6 (a house agent, dairy inspector, retired sack and twine dealer, a greengrocer and a sausage skin manufacturer). There was one family from an industrial occupation (electrical engineering designer). Only one 1918 mother worked, assisting her husband in the greengrocery shop.

In sum, the art day class was attended by mostly single women whose ages ranged from 10 to 46, and the majority were aged between 16 and 24. Although the Harris Institute stated clearly in the prospectus that the art classes were intended for students who were serious about studying art for vocational reasons, this group of students, from a majority of professional families, may

appear to have been taking classes for general education. Looking into their circumstances in life lives reveals some surprising results, which I shall turn to later in the next section.

Future Careers

This section will see if the individual classes taken at the Harris Institute had any bearing on the future lives of the students, by researching a sample of 115 former students in the 1939 register. This sample is made up of 39 women who studied in 1914 and 76 who studied in 1918. The sample was chosen based on the students whose details could be found in the 1939 register, and represents 45% of the 1914 students, and 38% of the 1918 students. Many of these former students were married and had children of school age by this time, which may have affected their occupational status. The following Table 4.9 shows the former students from the sample who were married, single, widowed or divorced by 1939.

Table 4.9. The number of former students in the sample and their marital status in 1939.

	1914 cohort	%	1918 cohort	%
Married	25	64	39	51
Single	11	28	34	45
Widowed	2	5	2	3
Divorced	1	3	1	1
Total	39		76	

The most obvious difference is that the students who had attended in 1918 were more likely to be single in 1939 than those who had attended in 1914. The reason for this can only be speculated upon. The 1914 cohort, who had been mostly aged 20 to 24, by 1939 would have been aged 45 to 49. The 1918 cohort who had mostly been aged 16 to 17, by 1939 would be about 37 to 38. It may be that the 1918 cohort had a reduced opportunity to marry following the war, or it may have been a choice made because of the opposition to married women working forcing them to stay single in order to pursue a career. A number of former students were working in 1939, 39% of the 1914 cohort, and 50% of the women who attended in 1918. The next Table 4.10 shows the number of those working and their marital status.

Table 4.10. Showing the number of former students in the sample who were working in 1939 and their marital status.

	1914 cohort	%	1918 cohort	%
Married and work	1	7	9	24
Single and work	11	73	28	74
Widow and work	2	13	1	3
Divorced and work	1	7	0	
Total	15		38	

The number of women who worked and were single, was proportionately similar from both cohorts, however there were more married women working from the

1918 cohort. This might be attributed to the fact that more of this group were studying vocational classes. The married woman from this sample who studied in 1914 and worked in 1939, worked as a shop manager (she had been a weaver taking English in 1914). The divorced woman was a clerk in 1939, she had worked as shorthand typist during the war studying French. The married women from this sample who studied in 1918 and worked in 1939, were made up of three office workers (two had been office workers and one a factory worker but all studied clerical subjects during the war); one cotton weaver (who had worked as a cotton winder and taken a class in shorthand); two factory workers (who had both taken clerical classes); one farmer (who had been a clerk taking shorthand); one sewing machinist (who had been a dressmaker studying music) and one shop assistant (who had taken a class in bookkeeping.)

Moving now to the women who were pursuing careers which apparently related to the subjects they studied at the Harris Institute, and ignoring their marital status; in 1914, 15 women worked, nine in occupations related to their classes, which is 60%. Eight of these were teachers who had studied academic subjects – art, foreign languages, science and mathematics, but there was also one clerical worker who had been a clerk in 1914, studied bookkeeping and was a clerk in 1939. 38 women from the 1918 cohort worked and 24 were in related occupations, which is 63%. There were nine office workers in 1939 who had taken clerical subjects at the Institute, eight of them were already working in clerical jobs, and one had been a factory worker. One woman worked as a tracer in 1939 and she had been a tracer in 1918 when she studied engineering drawing. One woman worked as a photographer in 1939 having studied art in

1918 when she worked as photograph retoucher. One woman worked in a shop and had studied bookkeeping at the Institute.

The women who pursued courses in technical areas were the first to move into these new areas during the war. By 1939, two of these students had emigrated to Canada, eight were married and three single.[161] None of the married women worked but all three single women did; two of them were still tracers, the third was a bank clerk. The students in the art day class, as noted earlier, were a discreet group from the professional classes, taking classes at the Art School which were designed for careers in art and design. Very few of this group had been working when they attended the class, but by 1939, 42% were working. It is interesting to note that just over half this group were married and not working in 1939; those who had occupations in 1939 were all single. Significantly, 45% of those working were in art and design related occupations. These figures suggest that for some, their motives were not entirely recreational, and they were able to form a career following their artistic training.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have shown that through the war years, the number of women attending the Institute more than tripled, and individual classes were the preferred option for female students. The age profile of the students was younger by 1918 compared to the start of the war. The number of students in paid occupations increased in the period from 59% to 83%. In 1914, most of those working were teachers, but by the end of the war the majority were office workers. There were few cotton operatives attending throughout the war, but a

[161] Information for four of these students after the war could not be found.

small new group of students emerged by 1918 who worked in engineering related areas.

A significant number of students were taking academic subjects, which were probably vocational for teachers. As their occupations moved away from teaching to clerical work, so did the courses they were studying, and another sizeable proportion were taking classes for recreation. As the war progressed, there is evidence that women had begun to take advantage of the new opportunities to work in technical trades, and engaged in study to gain skills in engineering related occupations. The art day class had kept going throughout the war, and although few of its students worked at the time, they were taking a class that was intended for employment in the art and design world, and by 1939, 42% of art day class students were working, with 45% in art and design related occupations. This compares to the technical students: 95% had worked during the war, but by 1939, 25% worked, although 75% of them worked in engineering related occupations.

This study has shown the importance of vocational training to women. The provision of classes one night a week, as opposed to three, and the range of subjects, were clearly significant factors for women; individual classes remained the most popular mode of study throughout the war, attracting students from far and wide. The increasing numbers, along with the variety of subjects taken, indicate significant new and continuing education for careers in teaching, office work, artistic and technical areas.

CONCLUSION

The historiography of women on the Home Front continues to receive, rightly, much attention, but up to now has tended to focus on opportunities for women's work, particularly in munitions, nursing or as land girls. This case study has made visible the notable number of women from Lancashire who did not go into munitions factories but who sought vocational education, especially in commercial subjects. These students worked in a variety of occupations during the war, but the number taking commercial classes and engaged in commercial occupations, shows that training for clerical work was especially relevant to them. By attending the Harris Institute, these women were displaying agency in their education but also their leisure time. By gaining skills for work, they were planning future careers, and this study argues that their education was not constraining, but liberating, even if the benefits may have only been temporary. The apparent spending of wages and spare time on leisure pursuits, suggests autonomy. Although this study is limited to the women who enrolled at one Institute, it is acknowledged that the particularity of society in Preston at the time shaped the experience and opportunity for these students. However, the study confirms the importance of post-compulsory vocational training, and its inter-relationship with clerical work, to this group of Lancashire women during the war - an area of study that has previously received little attention.

Even though the Harris Institute Council had taken steps to expand its provision to women in the period leading up to the First World War, they still remained a small proportion of the student body in 1914. Before the war, classes for women and girls were provided in the School of Domestic Science, and women had little choice of attending classes in other areas despite wanting to take lessons

in clerical subjects, as was noted by the government Inspector.[162] However, the next four years saw a widening of the curriculum for women into commercial subjects (and even technical areas towards the end of the period), which led to significant increases in the number of female students. Not all the students were in paid employment, but the proportion of women who were increased by 1918. The female cohort got younger, and the range of their occupations widened, so that the typical female student changed from being a teacher in her twenties at the start of the war, to an office girl in her mid to late teens by the end.

The majority had left school and lived at home, and were at the stage in life before marriage, when traditional middle-class ideologies would have them preparing for their role as wives and mothers, or good workers. Yet their parents were willing for them to experience the freedoms associated with attending the Institute, which meant leaving their neighbourhoods and the possible exposure to influences outside parental control.[163] The mapping exercise in Chapter One showed that the Harris Institute was a place where women could widen their reference group and broaden their geographical horizons when they left their homes in rural farming areas, tight-knit working-class communities, and pleasant suburbs to attend classes in the town centre. Some students had to travel long distances at night to attend classes where they mixed with people from different age groups, occupations, and even the opposite sex, all within the confines of the educational establishment; another example of the increased independence women experienced during the war.

[162] HM Inspectors Report 1911.
[163] Roberts (1984) page 184.

The types of families that were willing for their daughters to step out of the home to pursue vocational training during the war were explored in Chapters Two and Three, where students from two contrasting areas were studied. The majority of these families relied on manual occupations and trade for the household income, implying a similar socio-economic background, yet the two areas were different in character - the Ashton students came from comfortable homes, whereas the Fishwick neighbourhood was less affluent. The contrast in the number of students in paid occupations from these two areas was noticeable in that in 1914, almost all the Fishwick students worked, compared to a minority of Ashton students; but women from both areas displayed similar aspirations when they sought vocational training, particularly in clerical subjects. By 1918 the number in paid work was comparable for both areas, and the majority were in clerical occupations. This small study shows that clerical workers were not just from professional or middle-class families[164] and that more women from slightly better off homes were in paid work at the end of the war.

Chapter Four concentrated on the women who enrolled on individual classes, a mode of study that was clearly important to them, as this group made up over half the female students. They came from diverse urban and rural areas in and around Preston, and although there was some variation in their family backgrounds, the evidence showed that the majority of the parents worked in manual occupations. The study showed that the subjects taken as individual classes changed in the period, from mostly academic subjects in 1914 to a majority of clerical subjects in 1918, and there were similar changes in the

[164] See Braybon (1981) page 64; Widdowson (1980) page 79; Woollacott (1994) page 2; Simmonds (2012) page 129.

students' occupations. During the four years of the war, the number of students in this group who were employed increased. In 1914, just over half the students were working, and most of them were teachers, but by 1918, over four fifths worked, most in clerical occupations. This led to the conclusion that the students were intentional about training for jobs even when they were not already in work, and that clerical work was where most of the opportunities lay. However, there were a few female students working in technical jobs, who enrolled on 'non-traditional' classes. Although they were a tiny number, they show that the classes offered to women were broadening, and the students were employed in a wider variety of occupation than was seen in 1914.

The art day class was another distinctive group which merited a study of its own. Only one or two of these students were in paid work, and unlike the rest of the cohort, most of them came from professional families. However, the evidence revealed that these women were just as keen as the other students to train for a career, because the art day classes were specifically designed for occupations in the art world. Although their more comfortable family background may have removed the economic necessity for them to work, the commitment of art classes up to five days a week could also account for the incompatibility with daytime working. For this ambitious group of women, art was not just a leisure pursuit, as was seen by their employment rate later in life.

These findings show that the female student cohort during the First World War were not confining themselves to the usual pathways for women of their age and status, such as domestic service or factory work. Nor were they following in their parents' footsteps and working the same type of jobs as them. As the war

brought new opportunities for women's work, this group did not choose to work in factories producing munitions. Instead, they took up posts in clerical and commercial work as opportunities expanded in this sector, and a small number worked in new technical areas and art and design. The increase in the number of students who were employed shows that women did want to work, and they did want to be trained in order to learn the necessary skills. This group of women were pioneers; they fit Purvis's profile of "the 'new woman' [who] challenged custom in many ways by engaging in a wide variety of activities outside the sphere of the home; she could be found in paid work and especially in jobs that were the preserve of men (such as clerical work), [and] seeking education…"[165]

However, the location of the Harris Institute, at the heart of a Lancashire industrial town, is an important factor. The economic and social position of Lancashire women in the period leading up to the First World War has been examined by historians, particularly how the working conditions of female textile workers gave them a unique status.[166] Schwartzkopf found that among cotton weavers "there was no division of labour by gender,"[167] thus challenging assumptions of gender specific roles in the workplace. According to Savage,

[165] Purvis (1989) page 62.

[166] For references to the unique situation for women workers in Lancashire, see Roberts, Elizabeth. *A Woman's Place - An Oral History of Working-Class Women 1890 - 1940* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Inc, 1984); Roberts, Elizabeth. *Women's Work 1840 - 1940* (Cambridge: The Press Syndicate of the University of Cambridge, 1995. First published 1988.); Savage, Michael. *Women and Work in the Lancashire Cotton Industry, 1890 – 1939)* in Jowitt, J. A. and McIvor, A. J., (1988) *Employers and Labour in the English Textile Industries, 1850-1939*. pp203 - 223. (London: Routledge, 1988.); Schwarzkopf, Jutta, Dr. *Unpicking Gender: The Social Construction of Gender in the Lancashire Cotton Weaving Industry, 1880-1914*, Taylor & Francis Group, 2004. *ProQuest Ebook Central*, https://ebookcentral.proquest.com/lib/uclan-ebooks/detail.action?docID=429839 Accessed 12 July 2022; and Liddington, Jill, and Norris, Jill. *One Hand Tied Behind Us: The Rise of the Women's Suffrage Movement.* (London. Rivers Oram Press, 2000) and Liddington, Jill. *The Life and Times of a Respectable Rebel: Selina Cooper, 1864 – 1946.* (Virago Press: 1984.)

[167] Schwarzkopf (2004) page 4. Accessed 12 July 2022.

"…large scale female employment in the Lancashire cotton industry… gave women a prominent role in the formal economy [and] seemed to give women considerable potential for exercising autonomy and control, and asserting their independence from the family and household."[168] As the cotton industry began to decline in Preston, the growing professional and commercial sector offered new prospects; opportunities in vocational training opened up during the war for women willing to invest in themselves and their work. The unique economic and cultural landscape of Preston's society, then, may have influenced the students' and their families' attitude to work. A study made of women attending educational institutions in other areas may draw different conclusions.

It is not clear if the Harris Institute made more courses available to women because of the war, and in the absence of potential male students; whether the courses and classes were still available after the war has not been researched. Nevertheless, the increasing numbers show that wartime opportunities to study were readily taken up by women. It is also impossible to know if the women considered the long-term prospects that their education could give them. They may have seen their work as temporary - either for the duration of the war, or until they got married. Nonetheless, it was a big commitment, both financially and in time and effort. Yet there were some women for whom the classes appear to be pursued for recreational purposes, an indication of decisions being made to spend money on leisure pursuits. That these classes took place outside the home and in the evenings across town, is evidence of some level of autonomy, independence and freedom from social constraints.

[168] Savage (1988) page 203.

The registers, along with the census information, revealed that the students came from a broadly similar socio-economic background of upper-working and lower-middle classes, with the possible exception of the art day class. While this may have been expected, this study has facilitated a detailed analysis of the type of women who were taking post-compulsory classes during the war. Although it is recognised that debates around social status, opportunity and mobility are complex, social mobility has not been the focus of this study. Instead, using the parental occupations as descriptive terms helped to analyse the type of families that patronised the Institute. Although it is not possible to know who funded the classes, (the parents, the students, or even some employers may have sponsored them,) it is not implausible to suggest that the students themselves were willing to make the investment, even if it was short term. These families appear to have had aspirations for their daughters, and the investment would seem to have been important to them.

It is widely acknowledged that many of the gains made by women in the First World War were temporary, especially in industrial occupations like munitions work. This study looked at whether the investment in vocational training had long-lasting effects on the careers of the students. Any evidence that could be found was limited to the portion of students who could be located in the 1939 Register, and this revealed that a generation later, the majority were no longer employed. Most had followed the traditional route into marriage and were raising school age children. Yet some of the former students did work, and a number made good careers in teaching, the arts and non-traditional areas, which do appear to be related to their Harris Institute classes. Interestingly, whereas the war years saw teaching being replaced by office work as the most

popular occupation, by 1939, there were more teachers than office workers, evidence of the endurance of teaching as a long-term career for women. The women's own motives to study at the Harris Institute during the war cannot be known without asking them: some may have had a lifelong career in mind, others may have been 'doing their bit' for the war effort and only ever saw their paid work as temporary. Most of the students were of the age between leaving school and getting married, a time when they could earn a wage, but a career may not have been a long-term goal; as Roberts stated, "It may seem strange to modern readers that women as recently as the 1930s (or indeed later) genuinely saw their emancipation as being a move *away* from paid work outside the home towards staying there."[169]

Some women did make careers out of their wartime training, however it was the women who remained single who made good careers; indeed the art day class and the engineering students who worked were all single. There were a few married women who worked in 1939, and they were mostly from the lower-class area of Fishwick, although not many were in occupations related to the classes they took during the war. On the other hand, the art day class students, from mainly professional families, were more successful at making careers in associated occupations. These findings lead to the conclusion that although women from the lower, middle and professional strata of society were keen to take classes that might lead to better jobs and elevate their position, their socio-economic status was still influencing their job prospects.

[169] Roberts (1988) page 6.

Nonetheless, information taken twenty years after the end of the war about occupational status does not give the full picture of the benefits the students may have reaped from their investment. Although their marital status had an important bearing on their career prospects, and their social position may have influenced their opportunities for work after the war, they still gained valuable life skills and experience by attending the Harris Institute, which they could pass on to their own daughters. To know what happened to the students in the period straight after the war and before they got married would enhance this study, but at the time of writing, the 1921 census is not available. Further study into the futures of the students' own daughters would be interesting, to see if the baton of independence was passed on and influenced the aspirations of the next generation.

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