

**Title:**

Neither worker nor housewife but citizen: BBC's *Woman's Hour* 1946-1955

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**Abstract:**

This article investigates BBC radio's *Woman's Hour* in the post-war period. It explores *Woman's Hour's* focus and insistence on educating women listeners about their role as citizens, and the tensions this caused particularly between broadcasters and different groups of women. The article documents the programme's development of public and outward looking items, such as the reporting and covering of current affairs, public debates and national politics, women's party political conferences, and further introducing women MP's to the microphone. This gave the programme a public and arguably political dimension. The article thus places *Woman's Hour* within the broader historiography of the women's movement in this period, and illuminates the changing role and expectation of women, particularly the middle-class housewife.

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**Full article:**

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## Neither worker nor housewife but citizen: BBC's *Woman's Hour* 1946-1955

### Introduction

In May 1947 BBC Talks producer Peggy Barker described her work as a producer on *Woman's Hour* for the *Northern Daily Telegraph* in a piece titled 'What do women listeners want?' Addressing the question she listed various subjects including women's 'own special feminine interests', such as fashion and hair styles, elegance and glamour, as well as housekeeping and child rearing. However, she further argued that the kitchen (or the household) was no longer isolated 'and safe' from Whitehall, rather:

it is besieged by harassing difficulties and almost any decision taken in Whitehall will affect it. So that is definitely one kind of subject that women listeners would like to hear talked about over the air – they want to hear voices of authority explaining, advising and debating questions of public interest. To my mind any programme especially designed for women that does not cater for that sort of women's interests is falling far short of its duties.<sup>i</sup>

Peggy Barker's words illustrate how post-war policies and decisions were felt and practiced on a daily basis, and often done so by women, and that there was an expectation from broadcasters and listeners alike, that 'women's interests' were no longer solely confined within the four walls of the home. *Woman's Hour* was introduced on 7 October 1946 at 2 p.m. on the BBC Light Programme as something to brighten up the housewife's daily routine and chores, and the general dreariness and drudgery of post-war austerity. The programme was aimed at the female audience and the housewife in particular, and was placed at a time of the day when housewives could get on with household chores while still listening to the radio. *Woman's Hour* did indeed feature what was perceived as 'traditional feminine' interests such as fashion, cooking, household hints, health, and child rearing in many ways emphasising women's domestic role and responsibilities. Nevertheless, not long after its start, it had an ambition to broaden listeners' interests and engagement in public and political issues. For example, by including current affairs and service talks, as well as talks by women MPs, and further, by reporting from women's organisations, and the political parties' women's conferences.

*Woman's Hour* can still be heard on *BBC Radio 4* and its history and status as a brand has given it popular and academic attention. For instance its long running position has resulted in several anniversary books celebrating its history and role as a national institution.<sup>ii</sup> Attention has also been placed on the programme's pioneering and controversial output, for example, by talking about abortion, contraception and divorce, long before mainstream media did, as well as its close relationship to its listeners over the years.<sup>iii</sup> Radio and broadcasting histories covering the post-war period, recognise and acknowledge *Woman's Hour*, and here its domestic focus is centre stage.<sup>iv</sup>

This article takes an alternative perspective and explore the public and political dimension of *Woman's Hour* in the immediate post-war period. In particular it examines how *Woman's Hour* repeatedly emphasised the importance of citizenship and how to manage this responsibility, with the consequence that the programme became a key target for government campaigns and the political establishment as a 'gateway' to the housewife.

Firstly, I will argue that it is possible to see *Woman's Hour* as a continuation of women's programmes dating back to the interwar period that worked hard to combine and represent women's changing roles and civic responsibilities. This is evident, for example, in the discussions and debates around the programme's inclusion of current affairs and the programme's desire to broaden listeners' horizons. As will be demonstrated, this motivation was influenced by both gender and class expectations, that specifically reflected middle-class values. *Woman's Hour's* focus on active citizenship was inevitably partly shaped by the BBC's emphasis on social responsibility. The BBC ethos, had since its formation been focused on 'improvement of knowledge, taste and manners', that was based on a middle-class ideal.<sup>v</sup> This philosophy continued in the post-war period and can be identified within *Woman's Hour*. This allows us to distinguish radio and in this case the BBC slightly from women's magazines in the post-war period, which tended to treat women more consistently as consumers.<sup>vi</sup> Furthermore, by studying the production and editorial process of *Woman's Hour* in its formative decade it is possible to see how the programme reflected the changing role and expectation of particularly middle-class housewives. The material reveals underlying tensions due to differences between assumptions, attitudes, and expectations of different groups of women, based on social and educational background, and the broadcasters themselves. In many ways, *Woman's Hour's* focus on - and encouragement of - good citizenship mirrors the views of mainly conservative and middle-class voluntary women's groups at the time (whom it should be said the programme often collaborated with). Organisations, such as the National Council of Women (NCW), the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI), and the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds (NUTG), gave housewives opportunities to share experiences and interests. These organisations encouraged housewives to participate in local and national politics.<sup>vii</sup> Equally important, membership further enabled housewives to learn about the democratic process 'whilst providing them with the vocabulary necessary to discuss concepts such as political participation and social rights.'<sup>viii</sup> Historians have called for the revision of the term 'women's movement' and argued for an inclusion of a more diverse range of women's groups and organisations to be encompassed within this term.<sup>ix</sup> These groups might not have call themselves feminist but they continued to campaign for women's equal and social rights, and by doing so women's empowerment. It is within this historiography and historical context that BBC's *Woman's Hour*, as I hope to show, ought to be understood. It is therefore possible to argue that *Woman's Hour* was closely aligned with the broader developments in the women's movement and at the same time exercising a form of middle-class 'social leadership'.<sup>x</sup>

Secondly, *Woman's Hour* was not only of interest to various women's organisations. By 1946, the start of *Woman's Hour*, radio had proven to be an ample medium through which a

large proportion of the public could be entertained, informed and actively engaged in public and private life. As I will argue, this was an observation that both broadcasters, women's groups, and the political establishment were becoming well aware of. Because of *Woman's Hour's* emphasis on current affairs, coverage and reports of national debates, as well as the activities of women's organisations, talks by women MP's, and coverage of women's party conferences, it soon became recognised by the government and political parties as a channel for communication with women voters. This I will argue, gave the programme a political dimension not hitherto fully explored. The fact that mass media could potentially influence public opinion and play a key role in political communication was established already in the interwar period, when the parties sought to make use of broadcasting and popular newspapers to reach a mass electorate. Laura Beers has shown how by 1945, the Labour party was clearly aware of the centrality of mass media in modern politics and had since the 1930s been specifically keen to use it to engage with women voters.<sup>xi</sup> Additionally, historians have acknowledged that women played a key role in Labour's landslide election-victory in 1945.<sup>xii</sup> Post-war austerity and rationing further meant that women were in the crossfire as consumers and voters. In her study of post-war austerity, Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, maintained that men and women responded differently to austerity and consumption measures. Dissatisfaction with new cuts in food, such as eggs, poultry and bread, under the Labour government, steered women towards the Conservative Party who made extensive efforts to appeal and rally women voters.<sup>xiii</sup> In 1949, and also before the election in 1951, this was particularly stressed as important since 'women were numbers and influence'.<sup>xiv</sup> For this reason, both Labour and the Conservative Party tried to woo women voters. As a historical source, *Woman's Hour*, will further add to our knowledge and understanding of women's - and particularly the housewife's - political clout in the post-war period.

Finally, it should be said that this article draws on sources from the BBC Written Archives Centre, and include a range of documents, such as internal correspondence and memoranda, transcripts of programmes as broadcast, as well as listener research. Mass media sources are 'rich for attitudes, assumptions, mentalities, and values'.<sup>xv</sup> It has recently been demonstrated that the media and popular culture are important sources to be considered by historians, and women's history in particular, since these have offered 'spaces where hegemonic ideas of femininity are reworked and feminism facilitated'.<sup>xvi</sup> It is generally acknowledged in histories of women and broadcasting, that by the 1930s, radio was considered a domestic, 'feminine' medium that opened up new spaces for women that further challenged or loosened the boundaries between private and public life.<sup>xvii</sup> *Woman's Hour* is a good illustration of this and offered a form of political participation, and can therefore be used a lens to further explore women's and feminist history.

### **A woman's approach to current affairs?**

*Woman's Hour*, built on a longstanding tradition of women's radio programming at the BBC that had sought to consolidate women's different roles and responsibilities as mothers, workers, consumers and citizens. In fact, already in the 1920s and 1930s, BBC talks and programmes for women focused on a range of interests, inside and outside the home and

broadcasters experimented to find the ideal content, tone, speech and mode of address.<sup>xviii</sup> Responding to the needs of, and requests from, listeners was not always an easy task, especially with an audience comprising of women of different ages, from different educational and social backgrounds, some were married others not, some were homemakers others employed. The social status and level of education amongst listeners would often cause editorial dilemmas for producers and editors. Maggie Andrews has stressed that during the interwar period, radio offered multiple and contesting discourses of domesticity that was particularly subject to regional and class variation and this continued in the post-war period. For example, talks on housing and consumer durables on *Woman's Hour* caused controversy revealing social divisions and tensions between middle-class and working-class women's lives and domestic experience.<sup>xix</sup> In 1948 a suggestion, which appears to be a request from a woman in Birmingham, for a talk on refrigerators was rejected on the lines that listener correspondence showed that 'they are intensely irritated by such reminders of comfort beyond their reach.'<sup>xx</sup>

In addition the broadcasters themselves (often women) had their own beliefs of what was best for their audience. As Kate Murphy has showed; in the interwar period, the BBC addressed its female audience as home-makers and mothers, but at the same time was committed to widening the output and to encourage an interest in civic duties and citizenship, particularly after the passing of the 1928 Equal Franchise Act.<sup>xxi</sup> This balancing act would continue in the 1940s. At the outbreak of the Second World War, the BBC continued to place emphasis on women's domestic role and the importance of the home in wartime. Programmes like *Wise Housekeeping* and *The Kitchen Front* provided expert advice on food and cooking, and these often articulated national interests.<sup>xxii</sup> As the war progressed, focus shifted (particularly from 1941 with the registration for war work for women) and programmes like *Women at War*, *Mostly for Women* and *Woman's Page*, concentrated on women in the services and at work, and consciously steered away from domestic topics aiming to broaden the horizon for women.<sup>xxiii</sup> *Woman's Page*, for example, included talks on Equal pay, careers for women and the Education Bill, as well as talks on personal relations and popular culture (books and film).<sup>xxiv</sup>

*Woman's Hour* was at its start placed within the BBC Talks Department, which supplied the programme with producers and staff. During the period of investigation the programme was run by a small (mainly female) production team and one Editor (initially called 'organiser'). Due to pressure on staff a Deputy Editor was later introduced. In July 1947 Eileen Molony was appointed as the first formal Editor, and she was soon followed by Evelyn Gibbs in 1948 and Janet Quigley in 1950 (who was promoted to Chief Assistant, Talks Department in 1956). During the interwar period, talks and programmes for women were not a high priority for the BBC and those who produced women's broadcasts was able to work with a high degree of autonomy.<sup>xxv</sup> There are similarities found also in the post-war period. I have written elsewhere on how the programme's editors and producers initially fought against prejudice and patronising attitudes from fellow staff, and fought for editorial autonomy and internal recognition. The immediate popularity of the programme meant that there was increasing

pressure on staff and resources.<sup>xxvi</sup> Nevertheless, the women behind the programme would successfully develop and establish *Woman's Hour* as a staple part of the BBC's daily output.

Despite a long history of women's talks and programmes on the BBC, it was rather surprising then, that the first appointed presenter of *Woman's Hour* was a man, Alan Ivimey. This suggests a somewhat detached understanding from the management of the space *Woman's Hour* offered women. To have a man answering listener's letters and providing advice was rather condescending and missed the point. Ivimey, whose manner was criticised by listeners and the first listening panel, as being rather patronising, was soon replaced by Joan Griffiths in December 1946. Griffiths was a familiar voice from the BBC Forces Programme broadcast during the war.<sup>xxvii</sup> Other familiar voices would follow: Olive Shapley, a documentary and features producer took over as presenter in February 1949, and in 1951 Marjorie Anderson, Margaret Hubble and Jean Metcalfe, as the 'trio', were appointed. *Woman's Hour* was presented by women, made mainly by women producers and editors, and aimed for a female audience. This was important, as the programme developed and offered a space for women's politics.

*Woman's Hour* although placed within the Talks Department was broadcast on the Light Programme, which meant it also fell within Light Programme policy. The Light Programme featured popular, light entertainment programmes and majority of listeners were of lower middle- and working-class background. After the war the Light Programme launched several other daytime radio shows aimed towards women, specifically housewives: a music request programme *Housewives Choice* (1946-1967) and the domestic serials *Mrs. Dale's Diary* (1948-1969) and *The Archers* (1951).<sup>xxviii</sup> Thus the Light Programme has, rather unfairly, been described as feminine and domestic 'designed not for women at war, but women at home'.<sup>xxix</sup>

*Woman's Hour* was an instant success with the listeners and listening figures soon rose. At the end of October 1946, the Controller of Light Programme, Norman Collins, reported to the BBC Director General that the programme was doing rather well and had 'more than amply justified its inclusion in the Light Programme' and further emphasised its success and magnitude by saying 'at the moment more than a thousand letters a week are coming into *Woman's Hour*'.<sup>xxx</sup> The first programme was listened to by a panel of women including the film star, Deborah Kerr, the former Minister of Labour, Margaret Bondfield, and a North-country housewife, Elsie Crump. The panel was positive about the programme (except the male presenter as noted) and this trio would in many ways represent the type of women who would feature frequently on the programme suggesting a mix of celebrity, public profiles and the 'ordinary' housewife.

Not long after its start, producers were told there was 'too much cookery in the programme' and instructed to include more serious topics and discussion affecting domestic life in Britain.<sup>xxxi</sup> By the end of the month further requests were put forward that the programme should include talks on current affairs and Parliament.<sup>xxxii</sup> Equal Pay was first covered in November 1946 when Lady Davidson discussed the report of the Royal Commission on

Equal Pay.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Further requests were made by listeners. In October 1947 for instance, it was reported that a Mrs. Whitley, from Glasgow, had written to the programme requesting items on government and features on women's social work.<sup>xxxiv</sup> To begin with the Light Programme Controller, Norman Collins, instructed that current affairs on *Woman's Hour* had to recognise a 'woman's' angle. In one memorandum from January 1947 it was suggested that Collins had ruled out any talk no matter what subject 'which does not in some way accept the conception of a special audience of women in the home. Any subject which does not come under a recognised "women's interest" must be hung on a suitably beribboned peg.'<sup>xxxv</sup> The idea of a particular 'women's interest' would soon be challenged by producers and listeners alike. Neither did women listeners agree what kind of current affairs *Woman's Hour* should be covering, or if it should at all, have a place in the programme.

The inclusion of current affairs was pursued in 1948 when *Woman's Hour* started to work with the BBC's Further Education Experimental Broadcasts to find out what kind of current affairs women would like to hear. Listener research reports were made through collaboration with three women's groups: the National Federation of Women's Institutes (NFWI), the National Union of Townswomen's Guilds (NUTG) and the Social Service Clubs of the National Council for Social Service (NCSS). The research also included group discussions held at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations with two groups of working-class housewives and two groups of middle-class listeners (not described as housewives in the report but presumably women) living in or near London. The BBC had a tradition of working or collaborating with women's groups and organisations. As early as 1923 a National Women's Advisory Committee was set up to offer guidance on programmes and talks for women and this included for example Lady Denman, Chairman of the NFWI.<sup>xxxvi</sup> Whilst the nature and input from women's groups and organisations would change it was a regular feature in the post-war period. *Woman's Hour* received many requests from a range of women's organisations to report and represent their activities, such as the NFWI, the National Federation of Business and Professional Women (NFBPW), and the Women's Co-operative Guilds (WCG). They also utilised some of these groups in researching listeners' attitudes towards the programme.

In the report on current affairs produced in 1948, most of the listeners questioned came from a lower middle-class background, with the NCSS representing a lower income group. The purpose of the enquiry was to find out whether there was a need for current affairs, if the language used was appropriate, and finally if women wanted a 'specifically woman's approach to current affairs.'<sup>xxxvii</sup> It was reported that women from the NUTG and the NCSS listened mostly two to three times a week whereas women from the NFWI listened 'every day or most days'.<sup>xxxviii</sup> The report on current affairs is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly, several women from all three organisations said that they could 'assimilate the information in talks much more easily than by reading articles in the newspaper.' For example one woman said: 'I don't read the newspapers a lot and when you hear it on the radio it seems more interesting'. Another participant had similar views: 'it is easier to take in facts from a talk on the radio than reading the same thing in an article in a newspaper.'<sup>xxxix</sup> These comments were made more frequently by women from the NFWI and particularly the

NSSC rather than the more middle-class NUTG. However one NUTG woman recognised the value that the programme gave women listeners, and especially, the inclusion of current affairs:

Woman's Hour is a woman's programme, and therefore we usually find time to listen without fear of interruption, seeing all the family are either at school or work, so therefore we can enjoy the talks on current affairs and other talks. I like to listen because I learn things I should be too shy to ask anyone I know for fear of being thought ignorant, also because it is the only means most of us have of finding things out.<sup>x1</sup>

It is difficult to assess how representative and trustworthy these views were, still, the quotes do imply that these talks were of importance enabling women to catch up on public matters in their own time and space. Talks on radio are also written for 'the ear', and not the eye, meaning they have to have listenability, be simple, and accessible, a skill broadcasters initially had to learn.<sup>xii</sup> This means information is assimilated differently from say reading a newspaper. Listening to the radio enabled women to get on with housework, for example, cooking, sewing, or knitting, whilst being educated and informed. This underpins the notion that radio integrated women into the public sphere, rather than, 'reinforcing demarcations between the spheres of public and private'.<sup>xiii</sup> This also points to the fluidity of broadcasting and is particularly attributed to the nature of the medium itself. Radio as a public medium entered the private sphere, and as Paddy Scannell, in his important work on public service broadcasting argued, made the outside world accessible to all.<sup>xiiii</sup> At the same time the private sphere of the home 'literally domesticated the airwaves'.<sup>xlv</sup> The radio heavily featured domestic settings and routines, which particularly captured the imagined activities of the housewife, and was therefore itself integrated in everyday life.<sup>xlvi</sup> Listening to the radio can also represent a form of political agency since the act of listening can be understood as a responsive action, a public act in itself.<sup>xlvi</sup> So it is possible to argue that by choosing to listen to *Woman's Hour*, the different groups of women were actively engaging in the public sphere.

Secondly, the inclusion of current affairs in the programme would also attract different views shaped by education and social status. The report noted that literary skills also varied amongst the women, being poorer for NSSC members. The investigators drew the conclusion that there were clear demarcations between the groups and this also affected the way listeners understood or appreciated the talks. As an illustration we can look at one of the talks listened to during the enquiry with the title 'Shopping Prospects'.<sup>xlvii</sup> More or less all the women said that they knew the facts already, but the members of the NSSC were most in favour and commented positively that the talk provided background. Women from the NFWI on the other hand thought the talk propagandist, and listeners even questioned the speaker's facts on the sugar ration. The NUTG was also critical and suggested that the topic was government propaganda and that it did not cover anything new; these women were clearly more confident and outspoken, or at least wanted to come across that way. The last two groups also seemed to prefer a more general point of view rather than a 'woman's one', implying a degree or



awareness of equality.<sup>xlviii</sup> It is not surprising that the women representing the NFWI and NUTG were more outspoken and gave the impression they already knew the facts and figures – they even questioned them. Voluntary women’s organisations such as the NFWI and the NUTG strongly believed women as housewives, mothers and citizens, had a responsibility to be interested in local and national affairs, and groups like these had campaigned to influence social and housing policy.<sup>xlix</sup> Middle-class women found a voice through their status as housewives and professional home makers, which enabled them to speak out and arguably gave women political agency.<sup>1</sup>

The concluding thoughts of the report suggested that *Woman’s Hour* needed to ‘take into account two quite separate types of listener, whose educational needs appear to be to some extent incompatible.’<sup>li</sup> One of the groups taking part in the report, whose volunteers were working-class housewives, had first expressed a keen interest in the current affairs item but later responded that current affairs was treated in so many other BBC programmes that it was not needed in this programme. The investigator was surprised since most of the women were described as being ‘more politically and culturally conscious than the average’, instead they had argued that *Woman’s Hour* did not contain ‘enough material of practical interest to the working class housewife, who is interested in running her home and feeding her family under conditions imposed by rationing and inadequate income’.<sup>lii</sup> A further observation was that the investigator’s impression of the woman’s attitude to current affairs varied depending on her position in the family: ‘Because of this relationship, she may not consider current affairs within her province at all; on the other hand she may be on an equal footing with her husband in outlook and interests.’<sup>liii</sup> The report believed that attitudes to public and domestic affairs were changing and it spoke of:

a trend towards equalisation of the status of husband and wife, and towards acceptance by both of the need to enlarge the scope of interests of the wife in the sphere of current affairs and of the husband in the sphere of domestic affairs.<sup>liv</sup>

Investigators received mixed messages about the need and interest in current affairs amongst these listeners and the assumption was that social and educational background played a part in this. Middle-class women preferred to have current affairs in the programme, and current affairs that pointed to a general point of view rather than the ‘woman angle’. The assumption was also that working-class women would particularly benefit from these talks but the women surveyed expressed more focus on practical items that would help the working-class housewife in her daily life. This further implies that broadcasters and investigators saw the listener as mainly a married woman. Due to its scheduled time in the day *Woman’s Hour* was clearly aimed at the housewife. However, not long after its start it received requests to also cater for the working woman.<sup>lv</sup> The argument put forward being that there was not really a difference between ‘women with home interests and women with careers.’<sup>lvi</sup> The dilemma of pleasing the listeners continued to occupy the producers of the programme but they clearly took on the feedback provided. Four years later a new current affairs series was introduced called ‘Behind the Headlines’. This time it was noted that ‘the topics are to be current affairs topics not “women’s” topics’. The memorandum, however, continued:

there is a good deal of conflicting evidence about the acceptability of political topics. The more well educated listeners who write to *Woman's Hour* ask for these topics but the less well educated ask for them to be avoided. We shall have to find a midway course by experience and listening-end check.<sup>lvii</sup>

Despite different views and tensions between the different listener groups on the suitability, tone and subject of current affairs, *Woman's Hour* would come to include regular current affairs items throughout the period under investigation and clearly aligned itself with the views of the more well-educated listeners. In the early 1950s, Isa Benzie, at this point a veteran BBC Talks Producer with a strong-minded personality, was in charge of current affairs in *Woman's Hour*. It was acknowledged that Benzie would 'hold a watching brief for us so that our responsibility to keep *Woman's Hour* listeners informed on public questions is safeguarded.'<sup>lviii</sup> At this point it was also established that the programme played a key role in connecting '*Woman's Hour* Current Affairs and the evening broadcasts which might give women listeners a fuller exposition of public matters.'<sup>lix</sup> Implicit in these comments is a desire to nurture, educate and inform, and a commitment to better and improve listeners understanding and awareness of the public and political context. Broadcasters, such as the BBC, was convinced that the listener played a part in a larger community contributing to the general state of the nation carrying a range of domestic and social responsibilities and a role to play 'in the larger community of public affairs and national life'.<sup>lx</sup> This notion of 'public service' was not only filtered through the BBC. James Hinton has argued that middle-class housewives constructed their identity around a Victorian ethos of public service and exercised a form of social leadership.<sup>lxi</sup> It could therefore be argued that a similar exercise of 'social leadership' took place via *Woman's Hour*. As a programme it was shaped by an interwoven class and gender identity. Current affairs in *Woman's Hour* would consist of both domestic and foreign affairs, and it appears that the programme shifted its outlook to a broader focus. Examples of this include, in February 1951, an item on 'Flood control'<sup>lxii</sup>, in March 1952 a talk on Djakarta,<sup>lxiii</sup> and in 1953 the programme discussed the 'peace offensive' in Korea.<sup>lxiv</sup> The inclusion of current affairs in the programme was not the only strategy used to educate, inform and foster a responsible and active citizen. *Woman's Hour* frequently reported and often introduced new items that would give women listeners 'a glimpse of a far horizon, a new sphere of thought, a strange and unfamiliar subject'.<sup>lxv</sup> They also repeatedly invited women MP's to the microphone.

### **Women in the House: *Woman's Hour* and citizenship**

The appearance of women MP's in BBC's women's programming was, however, not a new or novel idea. The use of women MP's was initially pioneered by Hilda Matheson, appointed as the BBC's first Director of Talks in 1927. Matheson, educated at Oxford, was keen to expand the scope and range of women's talks and in 1929 introduced a new series, *The Week in Parliament*, which featured women MP's talking about the mechanisms of Westminster.<sup>lxvi</sup> As noted, talks by women MP's would continue in the post-war period and provide a similar role and function; namely to provide a personal insight to the inner workings of Westminster and - to use Talks Producer Peggy Barker's words - emphasise that 'the kitchen (or the

household) was no longer isolated' from Whitehall. This line of argument illustrates in many ways the views of voluntary women's groups at the time, whom may have rejected the term 'feminism', but 'acknowledged the status of women as equal citizens and continually sought to inform and educate their members about the importance of democratic citizenship.'<sup>lxvii</sup> In July 1947 contributions to *Woman's Hour* by MP's were fully approved; subject to relevance and to political balance.<sup>lxviii</sup> The talks by the MP's were not party political broadcasts instead the women MP's were often asked to discuss the role of women in politics, or issues related to women such as Equal Pay.<sup>lxix</sup> At times talks by women MP's served to provide insight and illustration to the political process and the women's own experience of this.<sup>lxx</sup> As I will show later, although party politics was not the focus, this kind of publicity was nevertheless valued by the political parties and perceived as an opportunity to connect with women voters.

Speaking in 1948, the Labour Prime Minister Clement Attlee said: "Socialism demands a higher standard of civic virtue than capitalism. It demands a conscious and active participation in public affairs."<sup>lxxi</sup> *Woman's Hour's* aims and aspirations appear to have encouraged this type of civic virtue. It is important to note, however, that the 'conscious and active' participation that Attlee spoke of was promoted by the programme even after a Conservative victory in the 1950s. As post-war austerity and the economic crisis deepened *Woman's Hour* with the help from women MP's continued to emphasise the importance of taking an active role and interest in national politics and citizenship. For example, on *Woman's Hour* in 1948 Liberal MP Lady Megan Lloyd George and Labour MP Leah Manning respectively talked about the importance of the women's vote arguing for an active citizenship. Both were keen to make women listeners aware of their powers as voters and members of a democracy. Megan Lloyd George was a familiar public figure as the daughter of former Prime Minister Lloyd George and a successful politician and MP in her own right. In June her talk 'Is Parliament Your Affair?' urged women to realise that most of the things that affected them in the home had a correlation to politics. Much of the government's policy was centred on the household and the domestic sphere, and this would position the home, 'as the symbolic, and actual, centre of post-war reconstruction.'<sup>lxxii</sup> The talk, which was a colourful description of the inner workings of Parliament, emphasised that 'Parliament is very much your affair' and whatever was discussed in Parliament had direct impact on ordinary life, and particularly women. Hence Megan Lloyd George argued it was of vital importance to be engaged in the outside world and not to take information and views second-hand. She ended her talk: 'the best recipe for a good wholesome democracy is a well-informed public opinion.'<sup>lxxiii</sup> In October Leah Manning spoke on the topic: 'Is there a Woman's Point of View in Politics?' Manning, a left wing socialist active in educational work and women's rights also made the point that wider issues such as finance and economics mattered to women:

Yes indeed, in these matters too there is a woman's point of view and it is of paramount importance. If I could take you with me into the Chamber during some all night sitting when a Finance Bill is under consideration, you would see the women of all Parties lined up, aching to get into the Debate to offer the Chancellor "The Woman's Point of View" on certain items in his Budget.<sup>lxxiv</sup>

The inclusion of women MP's continued throughout the period. In July 1956 *Woman's Hour* introduced a new discussion series in the programme's Sunday repeat *Home for the Day* called 'Women in the House'. *Home for the Day* was first introduced in 1953, but an initial repeat of items from *Woman's Hour* was broadcast weekly on Sundays from August 1951. This was due to pressure from women working in industry and from various women's organisations such as the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs who argued that working women were not able to listen during the day.<sup>lxxv</sup> The Labour MP and social reformer Edith Summerskill took part in the series, the purpose of which was to introduce the audience to a range of women MP's 'to hear your point of view on Parliamentary and current topics.'<sup>lxxvi</sup>

These examples illustrate, more importantly, that personal experience was connected to public and political questions, and that the housewife was expected to contribute to public life. This sense of civic duty and social responsibility can also be found in the hugely successful domestic serial *Mrs. Dale's Diary*, also broadcast on the BBC Light Programme. The serial, which focused on a middle-class housewife, Mary Dale a doctor's wife, was set in leafy Parkwood Hill, a fictional north London suburb. In its first four years (1948-1952) the serial was more focused on the private side of domestic life. However, to meet the expectations of a middle-class housewife, changes to the strict editorial policy were proposed to allow characters to become more involved and interested in the outside world.<sup>lxxvii</sup> These changes, which were prompted by a sequence of events, resulted in a serial with a sense of social responsibility in which characters including Mrs. Dale became involved in public and political issues affecting the local community.<sup>lxxviii</sup>

In this period *Woman's Hour* never used the word 'feminist' to describe their work (in the archival material the word is more or less absent) however in many ways this was a form of empowerment. Indeed, we might suggest that *Woman's Hour* was a good example of what Naomi Black defines as 'social feminism'. Black suggests that social feminists believed women could be integrated into the public sphere through their domestic role. The argument, she notes, 'was implicitly for the integration of the social and the political, the movement of women into the public sphere in the extension of their domestic role.'<sup>lxxix</sup> This is also consistent with middle-class voluntary women's groups active in the post-war period that endorsed women's domestic role but at the same time 'encouraged members to participate in local and national politics and campaigned to ensure that women benefitted from the rights of equal citizenship bestowed upon them in 1928.'<sup>lxxx</sup> *Woman's Hour's* desire to be topical and to inform listeners about government policy and other public matters undoubtedly gave it a political edge. The BBC's archives reveal, in fact, that there had long been a sense among political and government figures that a programme such as *Woman's Hour* might be a suitable channel of communication with women. One instance of this can be seen during the economic and fuel crisis.

### ***Woman's Hour* as political communication channel**

A growing shortage of coal, the main source of energy, combined with cold weather in January 1947, would create one of the worst winters Britain had seen. On top of the brewing fuel crisis there was already an acute shortage of labour. The problem was so severe that between 1947 and 1949 the Ministry of Labour campaigned to get women back into the labour market. There were shortages within the textile industries as well as ‘vacancies in the Women’s Land Army, in nursing, midwifery and teaching.’<sup>lxxxix</sup> The success of *Woman’s Hour*, and its ability to reach millions of women made it particularly attractive. For example the programme was used to promote a recruitment campaign for the *Women’s Land Army* (WLA). In January 1947 it was noted by the Talks Department that the WLA was planning a forthcoming recruitment campaign.<sup>lxxxix</sup> The Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries were ‘about to launch a national advertising campaign to secure sufficient recruits for the WLA to maintain the Army at its present strength, in view of the very serious labour situation on our farms.’<sup>lxxxiii</sup> At a policy meeting in March it was then suggested that *Woman’s Hour* would cover the campaign and also include a talk on ‘Harvest Helpers.’<sup>lxxxiv</sup> The issue was further pursued in July when the Director of Talks was asked to consider a talk on the WLA on *Woman’s Hour*.<sup>lxxxv</sup>

The WLA however, was not the only organisation needing manpower in 1947; there was also a shortage of nurses. *Woman’s Hour* had planned an interview in March, ‘to be broadcast ‘live’ between Marian Cutler and Dame Katherine Watt of the Ministry of Health about the appeal for part-time voluntary nurses.’<sup>lxxxvi</sup> The fuel crisis, however, also had an impact on the BBC, which had to restrict broadcasting hours and output. The BBC Home Service and the Light Programme were thus temporarily merged into one service, ‘punctuated by long and mysterious silences’.<sup>lxxxvii</sup> *Woman’s Hour* itself was off air from February and was not resumed until the end of March. The interview with Dame Katherine Watt had to be postponed.

In his study of the Labour government and media, 1945-51, Martin Moore suggests that a series of BBC talks on ‘Britain’s crisis’ were produced in close collaboration with the government who wanted to increase national productivity by creating a ‘‘chain of persuasion’’ across a range of media.<sup>lxxxviii</sup> The BBC produced several talks explaining the crisis including *Woman’s Hour*. With the economic situation worsening, George Isaacs, Minister of Labour and National Service, directly appealed to *Woman’s Hour* listeners in a special broadcast in June 1947. The broadcast titled ‘A Word to Women’ pleaded for women’s help in factories, services and agriculture: ‘I’m sorry that I’ve got to make this appeal. You did well – amazingly well – by your country during the war, and it seems a pity that there is again this urgent call for your help’.<sup>lxxxix</sup> As the currency crisis worsened in July, Lady Reading, Governor and Deputy Chairman of the BBC, and the founder of the *Women’s Voluntary Service* (WVS), was particularly keen that the BBC would ‘explain the crisis to ordinary people’ and advise on what they could do to help.<sup>xc</sup> *Woman’s Hour* broadcast several talks related to the crisis from June to the end of August 1947, and with titles such as: ‘Can we make ends meet?’ or ‘Science and the Housewife – Facts about Fuel,’ these talks were of an informative and explanatory nature that explained the severity of the situation, and the need for women to take up employment.<sup>xcii</sup> The talk ‘Housewife meets Economist’ warned

that ‘people need to know quite clearly what an Economic Dunkirk would look like’.<sup>xcii</sup> It was a housewife’s duty to contribute and participate in the national recovery.

Furthermore, it appears, discussing the urgent need for manpower also opened up discussion and debate on the position of married women and work. The decade after the Second World War was traditionally viewed by historians and feminists as a stifling place for women marked by gender conservatism.<sup>xciii</sup> Recent scholarship has sought to thwart this image considerably by identifying the post-war period as a time when women’s roles as housewives, mothers and workers were heavily debated in political, public and popular discourse.<sup>xciv</sup> On the one hand politicians and psychologists were worried about maternal deprivation and its impact on juvenile delinquency, strengthening the belief in full-time motherhood.<sup>xcv</sup> On the other hand due to fears of labour shortages and the reality of an economically shattered Britain women were still needed in the work force. As an effect of the war, the marriage-bar was removed, and with a growing availability (and acceptance) of part-time work, women including married, and middle-class women, took up employment.<sup>xcvi</sup> Broadcasts on *Woman’s Hour* with titles such as ‘Should women keep their jobs after they are married?’ and ‘Can a woman make a success of marriage and a career?’ emphasised the need for manpower and presented women’s contribution to recovery as a national duty. But at the same time they also presented valid arguments for why women might want to take up, or keep their jobs, after marriage. In one of the talks the discussion is between husband and wife, John and Isabel Merrett, the argument appears to be a question of modern attitudes:

- Isabel: Sheila rang up today. She wants your advice.  
John: Oh! What’s wrong this time.  
Isabel: She wants to take a job. She saw an advertisement which seemed to be just the sort of thing she would like – and then Peter kicked up a fuss about it. Said he wasn’t going to have his wife going out to work.  
John: Silly ass!  
Isabel: Well, I just told her to go ahead and take it. [...]  
Isabel: It always amazes me that there are still so many of these Victorian men about who just think that a woman’s place is at home [...]  
John: I say the same as you – she ought to be free to take a job if she wants to. Goodness knows industry needs all the women it can get because manpower is one of the greatest shortages now. Any woman who has the time – ought to take a job.<sup>xcvii</sup>

Another talk featured a discussion between the author and regular BBC contributor, Jean Cooper-Foster, and a housewife, Kay McMeekin:

- J. Cooper-Foster: There’s a desperate shortage of workers - I believe somewhere in the region of 300,000 more women are needed in industry to get this country back on its feet economically [...] and I feel very strongly that it’s the duty of every woman who possibly

can do so, to make a contribution to the economic recovery of Britain [...]

K. McMeekin: I feel that married women should confine their activities to the home, in fact make marriage a career.

Here, we find both women presenting their arguments about whether married women should work or not. The conversation outlined the main arguments about a wife's duty to her home and family as well as a woman's right to be independent and seek fulfilment in a career. Cooper-Foster pointed out that a woman who had trained for a career should be able to continue even after marriage. She should use her skill where it was most needed, in her job. Speaking of training and skill, McMeekin, suggested, 'a lot of people seem to think that a domesticated woman is rather a dull and mousey person, with no conversation except tales of the children's prowess.' On the suggestion by Cooper-Foster, that most housewives spend their leisure 'lapping up the latest Hollywood [sic] heart-throb', McMeekin retaliated that 'the modern housewife has a wide range of interests and I think it's the career woman who's much more likely to become stereotyped and develop a one-track mind.'<sup>xcviii</sup> The question whether to go out to work or stay at home prompted differences in opinions and women themselves had strong views on the issue. As worker or housewife, women were expected to meet national public duties and responsibilities, as well as their own private interests and fulfilment. National politics certainly flavoured these discussions and *Woman's Hour*, no doubt, contributed to the national recruitment effort for manpower. However I would argue, that these examples also detect another agenda. Namely, opening up a discussion on gender politics. The gendered nature of BBC radio with specific 'women's programmes' placed in the daytime schedule meant that it offered a public space for discussion and debate. To borrow a phrase from Michele Hilmes, 'under the cover of daytime', *Woman's Hour* could address and confront the issues facing women.<sup>xcix</sup> *Woman's Hour* promoted the domestic role of women, the programme was after all mainly aimed towards the housewife. But as a programme, it did acknowledge and support the fact that women's roles were changing; that motherhood and housewifery could be combined with work. The programme further represented and addressed the professional and working woman, producing on the whole a fairly diverse representation of the post-war woman.<sup>c</sup>

Britain's crisis and the need for manpower was not the only campaigns featured and another drive for recruitment slipped into *Woman's Hour*. In September 1948 it was noted by the 'Home Broadcasting Committee' that the Corporation 'should help where possible' on the current Territorial Army Campaign.<sup>ci</sup> In a confidential memorandum from the Assistant Controller of Talks, Mary Somerville, to the Editor, *Woman's Hour*, it was laid out that:

while recruiting for the voluntary element of the Territorial Army is not accepted as a Corporation campaign, its importance must be recognised and attention should be drawn to it in programmes where this can be achieved without sacrifice of programme interest. Will you please glance through the attached paper and let me know whether, and if so how, *Woman's Hour* could draw attention to it before the end of December, with particular reference to the A.T.S. (T.A.) section.<sup>cii</sup>

The potential to reach a mass audience saw other women's radio programmes targeted. The aforementioned Territorial Army Campaign appears to have had a direct impact on the scriptwriters of *Mrs. Dale's Diary*. In October 1948 it was decided that Mrs. Dale's son Bob Dale would join the Territorial Army.<sup>ciii</sup> Over the years there were other requests too, for various items on electricity and fuel economy to be included in the domestic serial, which prompted the Controller of Light Programme, Kenneth Adam to conclude: 'we clearly must be careful about the number of institutional references in this programme.'<sup>civ</sup> These kinds of campaigns or drives were not necessarily unnoticed by listeners. In 1949 a talk on 'Women in the Army' in *Woman's Hour* by guest speaker, Dame Mary Tyrwhitt resulted in three complaints, the main theme being: 'keep the Women's Services and recruitment out of *Woman's Hour*.'<sup>cv</sup> However, the inclusion of government campaigns as well as information about new government policy or legislation would consequently raise questions of political representation.

### **Political balance and bias**

Given the close interest of politicians, questions of balance and bias rapidly became a recurrent concern for the producers of *Woman's Hour*. Firstly, because the programme was dedicated to informing listeners about current government policy and legislation, and secondly, through its coverage of the political parties' women's conferences. Not long after its start, regular expert Marian Cutler began her various advisory talks explaining and informing listeners about new government legislation. In 1948 her series 'What's Your Worry?' focused on National Insurance: 'I've hardly time to say, "Hello" – for there are so many different points about the National Insurance scheme, and I know many of you have been waiting anxiously to hear how the new proposals will affect you.'<sup>cvi</sup> Another series of talks introduced in the 1950s with the title 'For your information' aimed to describe and 'explain new legislation affecting the housewife, and to remind her of the provisions of existing laws.'<sup>cvii</sup> An extract from a memorandum from Talks Producer Isa Benzie to *Woman's Hour* Editor Janet Quigley, in 1952, further reveals the programme's interest in national debates:

This is a week of big domestic debates in Parliament [...] The House of Commons debates Education today, Textiles and Unemployment in Lancashire tomorrow and the National Health Service on Thursday. My recommendations are [...] (a) Skip Education (b) Look upon Lancashire, price of cotton goods and unemployment as the top subject for the audience and do it on Thursday [...] (c) Add, if you wish on Friday, an account of the National Health Service Charges Debate, inviting Guy Eden, Lobby Correspondent of the Daily Express, to undertake the talk.<sup>cviii</sup>

The nature of the service and advisory talks, and the programme's focus on national debates and informing listeners about new government legislation, prompted concerns about political representation in *Woman's Hour*. For instance in 1950 Talks Producer Peggy Barker explained to the Controller of Talks:



in view of the fact that so many service talks in that programme are by their very nature bound to be devoted to explaining the Government's policy, *Woman's Hour* appears to be far more Left Wing than Right and, therefore, the Editor is not anxious to use a Labour MP.<sup>'cix</sup>

Almost a year later at a current affairs meeting, the issue was raised that a Conservative MP was urgently needed for general MP balance in *Woman's Hour*.<sup>cx</sup>

The BBC came under scrutiny from the Conservative party who in this period complained about a left-wing bias.<sup>cxii</sup> The political parties' women's conferences appear to have become a thorn in the side for the programme. In 1947 a memorandum reveals that *Woman's Hour* was even approached by members of the Conservative party (including the women's Press Officer) who were keen to supply a list of names of possible speakers. The *Woman's Hour* Editor, Eileen Molony, cordially replied that speakers were selected on merit and suitability not party-affiliation, but was quick to report back to the Controller of Talks that the programme had covered the Labour Women's Conference at Southport but not the Conservative Women's Conference earlier in the year.<sup>cxiii</sup> Not long after it was agreed by the Talks Department that all party conferences should be covered in *Woman's Hour*, 'when subjects arise which are in a general sense of special interest to women.'<sup>cxiiii</sup> That the reports from the party's women's conferences were of importance is further emphasised by examining one talk in detail. In 1949 Audrey Russell, the BBC's first woman reporter, gave an account from the Conservative Women's Annual Conference in *Woman's Hour*. Russell started by outlining the morning's main topic of discussion, the recently published Conservative Report on Women's Questions, *A True Balance: In the Home, in Employment and as Citizens*. She outlined some of the main points in the booklet such as, 'the strengthening of family life' and how on 'the employment side first and foremost on the list comes equal pay, that is the fulfilment by the next Conservative Government to come into power of the rate for the job. Then the simplification of the income tax laws.' After finishing her description of the booklet and the Conservative agenda, Russell described the rest of the afternoon including the debate on the need to promote closer understanding between the nations of the Commonwealth, and the question of housing. On housing Russell reported that:

Miss Elizabeth Christmas of Kensington, maintained that the majority of people didn't realise that it was "Nye Bevan who was stopping the houses from being built with, as she called it, his beastly quota system, under which only one private enterprise house could be built to every four council houses."<sup>'cxiv</sup>

In the early 1950s *Woman's Hour* continued to cover and report on the parties' women's conferences, for example the Labour women and Conservative women's conferences were covered in 1951. In April and May 1953 they reported both from the Liberal Party Conference as well as Women's Labour Party and Women's Conservative conferences.<sup>cxv</sup> The significance of *Woman's Hour* appealed to all parties – just as both sides of the political spectrum appeared to be recognising women's political interests more generally. Labour MP, Alice Bacon warned at a party conference in 1951:

never underestimate the importance of women at election times – or at any other times! [...] Miss or Mrs – 1951 does not ask her father or her husband how he is going to vote and then submissively put a cross in the same place herself. Women are rapidly becoming a great political force in Britain.<sup>cxvi</sup>

We can therefore see that the concern for political balance and bias in the programme was linked to the perceived impact it could have on women and party politics. In 1955, the BBC Handbook recognised, ‘that the appearance of an M.P. at the microphone, whether the subject of the broadcast be political or non-political, may inevitably carry with it a degree of publicity for the party to which he belongs.’<sup>cxvii</sup> This was clearly the case with *Woman’s Hour*.

## Conclusion

This article has demonstrated that through its emphasis on current affairs, coverage and reports of national debates, talks by women MP’s, and coverage of women’s party conferences, *Woman’s Hour* nurtured, educated and encouraged social responsibility and active citizenship. *Woman’s Hour* actively sought to encourage, address and represent women as citizens in their own right, taking an active part and interest in public life and national politics. The programme sought to connect and engage the housewife with the outside world - rather than protect or isolate her from it. *Woman’s Hour* should therefore be considered as a continuation of the pioneering talks for women introduced during the interwar period, and the more outward looking programmes that were further developed during the war, whose endeavour was to consolidate women’s domestic role and duties with social rights and questions of citizenship. Indeed, it can be argued the programme frequently made the point that the private domestic sphere was not separate from the public world or politics, instead the two were intertwined. Thus, *Woman’s Hour* is a good example of how radio, as Kate Lacey has argued, bridged the private and the public divide.<sup>cxviii</sup>

The desire to nurture good citizenship, however, was shaped by class and gender expectations and was particularly carried out on middle-class terms. Evidently there were tensions in determining what a programme for women should be about; whether *Woman’s Hour* should include current affairs, and whether this should include a specific ‘woman’s angle’ or not. There were tensions between broadcasters and different groups of listeners. On the one hand it was noted that particularly middle-class housewives and educated women preferred current affairs items, and current affairs reflecting a more ‘general’ view rather than a ‘woman’s’ viewpoint. On the other hand the impression was that working-class housewives preferred less current affairs and instead preferred more practical items.

The desire to educate and nurture women as citizens, consequently gave the programme a political edge, and arguably a feminist one too. In post-war Britain, women voters, including housewives, were seen as a strong and influential political force, consequently *Woman’s Hour* was attractive to all political parties as a gateway to the home. These observations further complicate our image of post-war Britain and the role of women. I hope therefore that

the article contributes to the historiographical narrative that is enhancing our understanding of public and private life in post-war Britain, and the complexity of post-war feminism.

## Notes

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<sup>i</sup> BBC Written Archives Centre (hereafter BBC WAC) Press Cuttings Talks 1947-1948 P310 3B (2) Woman's Hour, *Northern Daily Telegraph*, 13 May 1947.

<sup>ii</sup> Jenny Murray (1996) *The Woman's Hour: 50 Years of Women in Britain* (London: BBC Books); Martha Kearney, Jenny Murray and Sue MacGregor (contributors) (2006) *Woman's Hour: From Joyce Grenfell to Sharon Osbourne. Celebrating Sixty years of Women's Lives* (London: John Murray).

<sup>iii</sup> See Anne Karpf (1987) Radio Times – private women and public men in Kath Davis, Julienne Dickey and Teresa Stratford (Eds.) *Out of Focus: Writings on Women and the Media* (London: The Women's Press); Sally Feldman (2000) Twin Peaks: The staying Power of BBC Radio 4's Woman's Hour in Caroline Mitchell (Ed.) *Women and Radio: Airing Differences* (London: Routledge); Sally Feldman (2007) Desperate Housewives, 60 Years of BBC Radio's Woman's Hour, *Feminist Media Studies*, 7, 3, pp.338-341.

<sup>iv</sup> Maggie Andrews (2012) *Domesticating the Airwaves: Broadcasting, Domesticity and Femininity* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group), pp. 114-149. See also Sian Nicholas (1996) *The Echo of War. Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), pp. 123 - 139

<sup>v</sup> Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff (1991) *A Social History of British Broadcasting Volume 1, 1922-1939, Serving the Nation* (Oxford, Blackwell), p. 7.

<sup>vi</sup> For a discussion and analysis of women's magazines in the post-war period see Marjorie Ferguson (1985) *Forever Feminine. Women's Magazines and the Cult of Femininity* (Aldershot:Gower); Janice Winship (1987) *Inside Women's Magazines* (London, New York: Pandora). Stephanie Spencer (2005) *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* (Palgrave: Macmillan).

<sup>vii</sup> Caitriona Beaumont (2013) *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England, 1928-64* (Manchester: Manchester University Press).

<sup>viii</sup> Caitriona Beaumont (2009) Housewives, Workers and Citizens: Voluntary Women's Organisations and the Campaign for Women's Rights in England and Wales during the Post-War Period in Nick Crowson, Matthew Hilton and James. McKay (Eds.) *NGOs in Contemporary Britain Non-State Actors in Society and Politics Since 1945* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 61.

<sup>ix</sup> Beaumont *Housewives and Citizens*; Maggie Andrews (1997) *The Acceptable Face of Feminism: the Women's Institute as a social movement* (London: Lawrence and Wishart).

<sup>xx</sup> James Hinton (2002) *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War* (Oxford: Oxford University Press).

<sup>xi</sup> Laura Beers (2010) *Your Britain: Media and the Making of the Labour Party* (Cambridge: Massachusetts, and London, England: Harvard University Press).

<sup>xii</sup> See for example: Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska, 'Explaining the Gender Gap: The Conservative Party and the Women's Vote, 1945-1964, in Martin Francis and Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (ed.) (1996) *The Conservatives and British Society 1880-1990* (Cardiff: University of Wales Press); Pat M. Thane (2003) What difference did the Vote make? Women in public and private life in Britain since 1918, *Historical Research*, 76, 192, pp. 268-285.

<sup>xiii</sup> Ina Zweiniger-Bargielowska (2000) *Austerity in Britain: Rationing, Controls, and Consumption, 1939-1955* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 1-2. James Hinton has disputed this claim and argued that one cause for Labour's setback in the 1950 election was partly due to the desertion of working-class men not willing to support austerity culture that placed "nation before husband" see James Hinton (2004) "The Tale of Sammy

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Spree:’ Gender and the Secret Dynamics of 1940s British Corporatism, *History Workshop Journal*, 58, pp.87-109.

<sup>xiv</sup> Zweiniger-Bargielowska, ‘Explaining the Gender Gap’, p. 207.

<sup>xv</sup> Arthur Marwick (2001) *The New Nature of History: Knowledge, Evidence, Language* (Basingstoke: Palgrave), p. 168.

<sup>xvi</sup> Maggie Andrews and Sallie McNamara (Eds.) *Women and the Media. Feminism and Femininity in Britain, 1900 to the Present* (London; New York: Routledge), p.3.

<sup>xvii</sup> For further discussion of radio and the private/public sphere, see Kate Lacey (1996) *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio and the Public Sphere, 1923-1945* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press); Michelle Hilmes (1997) *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting, 1922-1952* (London: University of Minnesota Press); Kate Lacey (2005) Continuities and Change in Women’s Radio in Andrew Crisell (Ed.) *More than a Music Box: Radio Cultures and Communities in a Multi Media World* (Oxford: Berghan).

<sup>xviii</sup> Laurel Forster (2015) *Magazine Movements: Women’s Culture, Feminisms and Media Form* (London: Bloomsbury).

<sup>xix</sup> Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves*.

<sup>xx</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/5: Deputy Editor, Woman’s Hour to Miss K.M Healey, Birmingham, ‘Suggested talk on Refrigerators, etc.’, 19 August 1948.

<sup>xxi</sup> Kate Murphy (2014) From Women’s Hour to Other Women’s Lives: The BBC Talks for Women and the Women Who Made Them, 1923-1939 in Maggie Andrews and Sallie McNamara (Eds.) *Women and the Media: Feminism and Femininity in Britain, 1900 to the Present* (New York; Abingdon: Routledge); Kate Murphy (2016) *Behind the Wireless. A History of Early Women at the BBC* (London: Palgrave Macmillan), pp. 189-220.

<sup>xxii</sup> Nicholas, *The Echo of War*; Forster, *Magazine Movements*; Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves*.

<sup>xxiii</sup> Nicholas, *The Echo of War*.

<sup>xxiv</sup> Forster, *Magazine Movements*.

<sup>xxv</sup> Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, pp.189-220.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Kristin Skoog (2014) Striving for Editorial Autonomy and Internal Recognition: BBC’s Woman’s Hour in Maggie Andrews and Sallie McNamara (Eds.) *Women and the Media: Feminism and Femininity in Britain, 1900 to the Present* (New York; Abingdon: Routledge).

<sup>xxvii</sup> Sue MacGregor (2006) The 1940s in Martha Kearney et.al. *Woman’s Hour: From Joyce Grenfell to Sharon Osbourne. Celebrating Sixty Years of Women’s Lives* (London: John Murray Publishers), p. 6.

<sup>xxviii</sup> By 1969 *Mrs. Dale’s Diary* had been renamed the *Dales*. *The Archers* was first heard on the Midland Service in 1950.

<sup>xxix</sup> Ross McKibbin (1998) *Classes and Cultures: England 1918-1951* (Oxford: Oxford University Press), pp. 471- 472.

<sup>xxx</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/1: Memo from Norman Collins to Director General, 30 October 1946.

<sup>xxxi</sup> BBC WAC R51/642/1: Memo from Norman Collins to [various producers] and Assistant Controller Talks, 14 October 1946.

<sup>xxxii</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/1: Memo from Assistant Director of Talks to DT, 19 October 1946.

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xxxiii BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 11 November 1946. Equal Pay was also covered in June 1947 by Elaine Burton MP, who did a talk with the title 'What is she worth?' BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 13 June 1947.

xxxiv BBC WAC R51/640/3: Acting Talks Producer Glasgow to Editor WH, 'Suggestions for Woman's Hour', 31 October 1947.

xxxv BBC WAC R51/640/2: Memo from A. Gordon to ACT, 17 January 1947.

xxxvi Murphy, *From Women's Hour to Other Women's Lives*.

xxxvii BBC WAC R15/94: Further Education Experiment 'Report on three Current Affairs Talks in Woman's Hour', 1948, p. 1.

xxxviii Ibid. p.15.

xxxix Ibid. p. 7.

xl Ibid. p. 11.

xli Paddy Scannell (1991) *Broadcast Talk* (London: Sage Publications), pp.1-13

xlii Michael Bailey (Ed.) (2009) *The Angel in the Ether: early Radio and the constitution of the Household in Michael Bailey (Ed.) Narrating Media History* (London: Routledge), p.63. Bailey suggests that the BBC addressed its women listeners mainly as mothers or housewives given them a lesser role outside the home or in the public sphere.

xliii Paddy Scannell (1989) 'Public Service Broadcasting and Modern Public Life'. *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 11, pp. 135-166.

xliv Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves*, p. x.

lv Shaun Moores (1988) 'The box on the dresser': memories of early radio and everyday life, *Media Culture Society*, Vol.10, pp. 23-40.

lvi Kate Lacey (2013) *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (Cambridge: Polity Press).

lvii BBC WAC R15/94: Further Education Experiment 'Report on three Current Affairs Talks in Woman's Hour', 1948, p. 7.

lviii Ibid. pp. 8-9.

lix Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*.

<sup>1</sup> See Judy Giles (2004) *The Parlour and the Suburb: Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg).

li BBC WAC R15/94: Further Education Experiment 'Report on three Current Affairs Talks in Woman's Hour', 1948, p. 14.

lii BBC WAC R15/94: Memo from Education Officer South to Secretary S.B.C, 20 November 1948.

liii BBC WAC R15/94: Further Education Experiment 'Report on three Current Affairs Talks in Woman's Hour', 1948, p.10.

liv Ibid. p.10.

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<sup>lv</sup> For a more detailed discussion on this please see Skoog, *Striving for Editorial Autonomy*. For example the programme would eventually introduce a repeat at the weekend.

<sup>lvi</sup> Janet Quigley, 1951, cited in Skoog *Striving for Editorial Autonomy*, p. 109.

<sup>lvii</sup> BBC WAC R15/244: Note of Meeting between Editor Woman's Hour, Mrs. Cochrane, Mr. Postgate, 'Current Affairs Element in Woman's Hour', 3 September 1952.

<sup>lviii</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/10: Janet Quigley to John Green, 2 October 1951.

<sup>lix</sup> BBC WAC R51/112/2: Current Affairs, Minutes of Meetings, 2 October 1951.

<sup>lx</sup> Scannell, 'Public Service Broadcasting', p. 15.

<sup>lxi</sup> Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War*, for example through women's voluntary groups such as the Women's Voluntary Service (WVS).

<sup>lxii</sup> BBC WAC R51/112/ 2: Talks Current Affairs Minutes of meeting, 7 February 1951.

<sup>lxiii</sup> BBC WAC R51/641/1: Minutes of Woman's Hour meeting, 24 March 1952.

<sup>lxiv</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 1 May 1953.

<sup>lxv</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/11: Memo from Editor to Talks Producers, 'Window on the World, 10 January 1952. Another series had the title 'Other Women's Lives' (same as the interwar series).

<sup>lxvi</sup> Murphy, *From Women's Hour to Other Women's Lives*.

<sup>lxvii</sup> Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, p. 3.

<sup>lxviii</sup> BBC WAC R51/299/1: Light Programme, Minutes of meetings with Director of Talks, 22 July 1947.

<sup>lxix</sup> Labour's Elaine Burton spoke about Equal Pay on 13th of June, 1947. BBC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*. The Conservative Thelma Cazalet-Keir spoke on Equal Pay on 29 March 1951, for a reproduction of the transcript of Cazalet-Keir's talk, see Kearney *Woman's Hour: From Joyce Grenfell*, p. 81.

<sup>lxx</sup> For example on 7 October 1956 Nancy Astor was interviewed by Mary Stocks and gave a very personal insight into her first experience of Parliament. Kearney, *Woman's Hour: From Joyce Grenfell*, p. 78.

<sup>lxxi</sup> Prime Minister, Clement Attlee of the Labour party, speaking at a conference in 1948, cited in Martin Moore (2006) *The Origins of Modern Spin: Democratic Government and the Media in Britain, 1945-51* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan), p. 26.

<sup>lxxii</sup> Claire Langhamer (2005) The Meanings of Home in Post-war Britain, *Journal of Contemporary History*, 40, 2, p. 342.

<sup>lxxiii</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'Is Parliament Your Affair' by Lady Megan Lloyd George, 14 June 1948.

<sup>lxxiv</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'Is there a Woman's Point of View in Politics?' By Leah Manning MP for Epping, 18 October 1948.

<sup>lxxv</sup> For a more detailed account of the development of the repeat please see Skoog, *Striving for Editorial Autonomy*.

<sup>lxxvi</sup> BBC WAC RCONT: Baroness Summerskill of Kenwood (Edith), Talks 1: 1939-1962, Joan Yorke (Woman's Hour) to Dr Summerskill, 9 March 1956. Summerskill took part in the programme broadcast on the 15 July 1956.

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- lxxvii BBC WAC R19/779/1: Memo from McMillan to Adam, 'A report on the social status of the Dale family', November 1950.
- lxxviii Kristin Skoog (2013) "They're "Doped" by that Dale Diary": Women's Serial Drama, the BBC and British Post-war Change in Helen Thornham and Elke Weissmann (Eds.) *Renewing Feminisms: Radical Narratives, Fantasies and Futures in Media Studies* (London, New York: I.B. Tauris).
- lxxix Naomi Black (1989) *Social Feminism* (London: Cornell University Press), p. 26.
- lxxx Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens*, p. 3.
- lxxxi Sheila Rowbotham (1997) *A Century of Women: The History of Women in Britain and the United States* (London: Viking), p. 244.
- lxxxii BBC WAC R34/320/2: Controller of Talks, Policy Coordinating Committee Minutes, 24 January 1947.
- lxxxiii BBC WAC R51/735: Talks Suggestions Women and Women's programmes, January 1947.
- lxxxiv BBC WAC R34/320/2: Policy Coordinating Committee Minutes, 18 March 1947.
- lxxxv BBC WAC R51/735: Memo from Controller of Talks to Director of Talks, 11 July 1947.
- lxxxvi BBC WAC R51/640/2: Memo from Gordon to ADT, 11 March 1947.
- lxxxvii BBC Yearbook (1948), p. 69.
- lxxxviii Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin*, p. 196.
- lxxxix BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'A Word to Women' by George Isaacs, 2 June 1947.
- xc Moore, *The Origins of Modern Spin*, p.198.
- xci The broadcasts were: 'Can we make ends meet?' (12 June), 'Supplies and Shortages in the Shops (10 July), 'Science and the Housewife – Facts about Fuel' (11 July), 'Wages and Direction of Labour' (18 July), 'Housewife meets Economist' (23 July), 'Plans for Staggering Hours' (25 July), 'Economy Cuts' (8 August), 'Current Affairs – Control of Engagement' (15 August), 'Agricultural Production and Present Needs' (22 August). BBC WAC R1/83/3: Board of Governors Papers, 'Broadcasts on the Crisis,' G71/47.
- xcii BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'Housewife meets Economist', 23 July 1947.
- xciii Martin Pugh (2000) *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain* (London: Macmillan).
- xciv See Jane Lewis (1992) *Women in Britain since 1945. Women, Family, Work and the State in the Post-war Years* (Oxford: Blackwell); Pat Thane (1994) Women since 1945 in Paul Johnson (Ed.) *20th Century Britain: Economic, Cultural and Social Change* (London: Longman); Maggie Andrews (1997) *The Acceptable Face of Feminism The Women's Institute as a Social Movement* (London: Lawrence and Wishart); Martin Pugh (2000) *Women and the Women's Movement in Britain* (London: Macmillan Press Ltd); Pat M. Thane (2003) What difference did the Vote make? Women in public and private life in Britain since 1918, *Historical Research*, 76, 192, pp. 268-285; Judy Giles (2004) *The Parlour and the Suburb Domestic Identities, Class, Femininity and Modernity* (Oxford: Berg); Stephanie Spencer (2005) *Gender, Work and Education in Britain in the 1950s* (Palgrave: Macmillan); Dolly Smith-Wilson (2006) A New Look at the Affluent Worker: The Good Working Mother in Post-War Britain, *Twentieth Century British History*, 17, pp. 206-229.
- xcv For a discussion on these themes see Lewis, *Women in Britain since 1945*; for contemporary examples, see Donald W. Winnicott (1945) *Getting To Know Your Baby* (London: Heinemann); John Bowlby (1953) *Child Care and the Growth of Love* (London).

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<sup>xcvi</sup> Joanna Bourke (1994) *Working Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, Class and Ethnicity* (London: Routledge); Thane (2003) What difference did the Vote make?; Gerry Holloway (2005) *Women and Work in Britain since 1840* (London: Routledge).

<sup>xcvii</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'Should women keep their jobs after they are married?', 4 February 1947.

<sup>xcviii</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'Can a woman make a success of Marriage and a Career?', 6 June 1947.

<sup>xcix</sup> Hilmes, *Radio Voices: American Broadcasting*, pp. 151-229.

<sup>c</sup> Skoog, *Striving for Editorial Autonomy*.

<sup>ci</sup> BBC WAC R34/414/1: 'Policy Home Broadcasting Committee Minutes', 14 September 1948.

<sup>cii</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/5: Memo, Private and Confidential, 3 December 1948.

<sup>ciii</sup> BBC WAC R19/779/1: 'Script conference', 21 October 1948. It was further noted on the 25 November, that 'Bob's Territorial Service must be mentioned from time to time; not so much from the Military aspect, but as it affects his Domestic life. Through the Territorials [sic], Bob will make some men friends, join a Rugger Club, and generally be "toughened up". BBC WAC: 'Script conference', 25 November 1948.

<sup>civ</sup> BBC WAC R19/779/1: Memo from Controller, Light Programme to Charles Lefeaux, 23 November 1951.

<sup>cv</sup> BBC WAC R41/243: Summary of Woman's Hour Post for Week Ending, 18.11.49.

<sup>cvi</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'What's Your Worry?' – National Insurance by Marian Cutler', 10 February 1948.

<sup>cvi</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/16: Memo from Deputy Editor, Woman's Hour to Controller of Talks, 8 September 1953.

<sup>cvi</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/11: Memo from Benzie to Quigley, 25 March 1952.

<sup>cix</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/8: Peggy Barker to Controller of Talks, 21 July 1950.

<sup>cx</sup> BBC WAC R51/112/2: Current Affairs minutes, 31 May 1951.

<sup>cx</sup> The Conservative Party had in January 1947 produced a report based on analysis of BBC talks in the Home Service and it suggested that there was a left-wing bias. BBC WAC R1/83/4: 'Politics and the BBC an Analysis of Broadcast Talk,' 25 January 1947.

<sup>cxii</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/3: Eileen Molony to Controller of Talks, 30 October 1947.

<sup>cxiii</sup> BBC WAC R51/299/1: Minutes of Meetings Light Programme, 11 November 1947.

<sup>cxiv</sup> BBC WAC: Programme as Broadcast Transcript, *Woman's Hour*, 'Audrey Russell on the Conservative Women's Annual Conference in London', 20 May 1949.

<sup>cxv</sup> BBC WAC R51/640/15: Memo from Deputy Editor, Woman's Hour to Editor Woman's Hour, 'Women's Political Conferences: State of Play', 27 March 1953.

<sup>cxvi</sup> Alice Bacon cited in Martin Francis (1997) *Ideas and Policies under Labour, 1945-51: Building a New Britain* (Manchester: Manchester University Press), p. 205.

<sup>cxvii</sup> BBC Handbook (1955), p. 17.

<sup>cxviii</sup> Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies*; Lacey, Continuities and Change in Women's Radio.