

Women, Work, and the BBC: How Wartime Restrictions and Recruitment Woes Reshaped the Corporation, 1939-45

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Abstract

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During the Second World War, the BBC developed and grew as an organisation. Suddenly at the centre of communications between a country and its people, and Britain and the world, the BBC concentrated all its efforts into its radio programme streams through its domestic services, Overseas Services Division, and European Services Division. Most research on the British home front references the centrality of BBC radio in the everyday life of the nation. However, apart from a few exceptional studies there has been limited exploration of the BBC as an organisation during the critical war years, and no specific research has been conducted on the role that women played in sustaining the organisation. Women's working lives during the war have been explored, but only recently has attention been paid to women in white-collar workplaces like the BBC. Prior to the war the BBC, like many similar British organisations, was structurally gendered, although in some areas gender boundaries were more fluid. During the war, the BBC female workforce increased from one third to one half of all BBC staff members. These increases strained existing gendered structures and organisational changes followed. Labour shortages also provided opportunities for women to enter and advance within the Corporation, and the BBC altered their recruitment strategies to meet the crisis. This thesis examines the impact of wartime strains on the BBC as an organisation, and the adaptations needed to keep the Corporation on the air. First, the pre-war Women's Establishment, a gender-segregated administrative unit, that grew during the early years of the Corporation will be examined alongside the establishment of the marriage bar for women in the 1930s. As both the Women's Establishment and the marriage bar were casualties of wartime reorganisation, this discussion will examine what part the wartime crisis paid in their demise. The relationship with the government and the restrictions on wartime recruitment will be discussed across three separate parts of the organisation – the Administration Division, the Engineering Division, and the language-dependent Overseas Services and European Services Divisions. Each of these Divisions had differing status with the government due to operational needs and the Ministry of Labour and National Service's evaluation of the Corporation's importance to the war effort. Finally, the thesis will examine what special arrangements were made to meet the BBC's recruitment needs in a difficult labour market, including training and additional support for female staff with families. Examination of these issues will assist in understanding whether reorganisation, recruitment strategies and employment

concessions allowed individuals, particularly female staff, greater access to employment and advancement within the Corporation and the long-term effects this had on its organisational structure.

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AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

Various aspects of this research have been presented at conferences over the past several years. However, none of these conference presentations have been published. A publication co-authored with Professor Hugh Chignell of Bournemouth University is currently in press with the journal *Media History*, but the subject matter, while concerning a wartime staff member, focusses more on her post-war programming work.

ABBREVIATIONS

BBC. British Broadcasting Corporation

BBC WAC. British Broadcasting Corporation Written Archives Centre, Caversham

DG. Director-General

DDG. Deputy Director General

EEO. Engineering Establishment Officer

ENSA. Entertainments National Service Association

EiC. Engineer-in-Charge

F&D. Features and Drama Department

GEO. General Establishment Officer

GPO. General Post Office

GC&SC. Government Code and Cypher School

JME. Junior Maintenance Engineer

JPE. Junior Programme Engineer

LCC. London County Council

MOH. Ministry of Health

MOI. Ministry of Information

MOLNS. Ministry of Labour and National Service

O&M. Operations and Maintenance Department

OB. Outside Broadcast

PBX. Private Branch Exchange

PE. Programme Engineer

PMG. Postmaster-General

TA. Technical Assistant

TA(F) & TA(M). Technical Assistant (Female) and Technical Assistant (Male)

UPW. Union of Post Office Workers

WAAF. Women's Auxiliary Air Force

WEO. Women's Establishment Officer

WRNS. Women's Royal Navy Service

WSO. Women Staff Officer

YT. Youth-in-Training

Chapter One INTRODUCING WOMEN, WORK, AND THE BBC

In June 2015, the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) aired *The BBC at War*, a two-part series that marked the Corporation's role in the Second World War. The programme presented a vigorous organization bent on supplying the public with accurate news about the course of the war, as well as distracting entertainment to boost morale on the home front. Over the course of two hours, the programme showed just three photos that included female BBC staff members. In addition, the producers used visuals of a typist hammering out the words of BBC executives - the hands in the video were clearly male. Viewers would hardly know that during the war women would eventually comprise half of all BBC staff, that Vera Lynn was not the only popular female entertainer, and that the BBC war correspondents were not all men. *The BBC at War* relied on accepted notions of the BBC's role in the conflict and the public image the Corporation projected during and after the war. What was obscured behind this public image was an organisation that sought to reconcile fair access of opportunity for female staff with its own gendered organizational structures and management ideals. By examining the BBC's internal gender boundaries, recruitment strategies in the Administration Division and The Engineering Division, the introduction of technical roles for women in the Engineering Division, and the intersection of gender and nationality in the Overseas and European Services Divisions, this thesis will examine how the BBC adapted and changed in the face of the challenges presented by the war.

During the war, the BBC demonstrated fluid decision-making and adaptable behaviours particularly in recruitment methods. Like many organisations during the war, there was a constant renegotiation of standard procedures, with a demonstrated willingness on the part of some administrators to agree to staged changes. There were also individuals within the organisation who resisted these changes, often citing an unwillingness to create precedents that clashed with established procedures. The recruitment files for the Administration Division paint a picture of an organisation unable to function under the old regime. Long-term employees in charge of recruitment were reassigned, and other more dynamic individuals were brought in, particularly in the 1941 to 1942 period. In turn this dynamism was also partially rejected when the initial crisis seemed to pass. When the pace of change slowed in 1943, some of the 'old-hands' returned to former prominence. In some ways, this push for change in the crucial 1941 to 1942 period also reflected public anxiety regarding the course of the war. The 1942 reorganisation of the BBC perhaps was a manifestation of an institutional response towards the course of the war.

The relative independence exercised by the Engineering Division brought to the fore the importance of individuals within an organisational structure. The BBC's adaptable

behaviours were most noticeable in the Engineering Division. In contrast to the Administration Division, the Engineering management structure remained static during the war years, retaining individuals who had joined the Corporation in the 1920s. Although the Controller of Engineering, Noel Ashbridge, was resistant to change, his direct subordinates pushed through necessary adaptations to staffing by recruiting women and young men. These changes were a radical departure for this division of the BBC, and they were tolerated through necessity. Support from individual managers was also evident in other departments, whether in the recognition of the importance of female clerical labour to the smooth running of the organisation, or in the attempts to ease restrictions placed on foreign nationals within the BBC ranks. Individual influence, in both negative and positive ways, pointed to a more complex approach to the use of womanpower. The fluidity that was present in the war years also spilled over into the post-war era, but regressively with the reintroduction of more exclusionary policies.

Institutionally, the BBC had more in common with government departments of the era than industrial workplaces. For example, many of the technical positions in the Engineering Division involved operational ability as well as theoretical knowledge and were much more black-coat, or white-collar, than brown-coat, or blue-collar.¹ This emphasis on a high level of educational achievement was stressed across the whole of the organisation and resulted in a workforce that was much more middle-class than working-class. Similar to the Civil Service, the BBC had a gendered organisational structure that consisted of a feminised pool of clerical staff and a masculine administrative machinery. However, the BBC's emphasis on educated, experienced staff in its clerical ranks also meant that women in these positions played a crucial role in keeping the organisation in running order. Unlike the Civil Service, where female clerical staff were kept on routine matters, women at the BBC contributed a hidden source of labour beyond their innocuous titles, with the catch-all position of clerk belying far more responsible work. In addition, the BBC also had wider opportunities for women in more responsible gender-neutral positions, particularly, but not exclusively, in programme production.

BACKGROUND

The BBC is a world-renowned broadcasting entity, long-trusted for its international news and quality programming. Although it was a model for public-service broadcasting before the Second World War, the war allowed the organisation to expand from being more than just a model to become instead a beacon listened to and watched the world over. The

¹ The Engineering Division did employ labourers for carpentry and other fabricating tasks, but the bulk of the senior engineering staff were well-educated, and many were university graduates.

international organisation known and respected today resulted from wartime growth. During the conflict, the importance of the BBC as an international source of news was bolstered by the growth of Overseas and European Services Divisions broadcasting in English as well as a myriad of other languages. While scholars have traced this growth and examined its output, the organisational changes within the Corporation – particularly with regards to female staff – have received limited attention.² Looking inside the Corporation during this period of rapid growth in both personnel and output will help shed light on various aspects of the development of the organisation, particularly its gendered organisational structure.

First established in 1922 as the British Broadcasting Company by a consortium of radio manufacturers at the behest of the Post Office, the BBC became a public corporation through a government charter in January 1927.³ Although the BBC held a monopoly on broadcasting within the United Kingdom, the Corporation faced competition from English-language commercial stations on the Continent which had been established to circumvent the banning of commercial activity on the radio.⁴ Highly popular in Britain, especially on Sundays when the BBC's schedule was both short in length and sober in content, the continental stations were closed down in September 1939 which allowed the BBC an almost exclusive control of broadcasting within the United Kingdom.⁵ After 1940, the continental stations' transmitters were used for German aims in the occupied countries, until they were taken over by the allies during the D-Day invasions in 1944.⁶ Although viewed as an instrument of the government outside the UK, within Britain, the BBC strove to demonstrate an independence from government diktats, to varying degrees of success.⁷

² Asa Briggs, *The War of Words*, vol. III, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1992); Siân Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1996); Alban Webb, *London Calling. Britain, the BBC World Service and the Cold War* (London: Bloomsbury Academics, 2015); Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53*, *Studies in Popular Culture* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Thomas Hajkowski, "The BBC, the Empire, and the Second World War, 1939-1945," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 22, no. 2 (2002); Simon J. Potter, *Broadcasting Empire: The BBC and the British World, 1922-1970* (Oxford University Press UK, 2012).

³ Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting: Volume One, 1922-39 - Serving the Nation* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1991), see Chapters 1 and 2 for the establishment of the BBCs governing policy during its early years.

⁴ Erik Barnouw, "Propaganda at Radio Luxembourg: 1944-1945," in *Film & Radio Propaganda in World War II*, ed. K.R.M. Short (London & Canberra: Croom Helm, 1983), 192; Sean Street, "BBC Sunday Policy and Audience Response 1930-1945," *Journal of Radio Studies* 7, no. 1 (2000): 161-179.

⁵ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 330-332; Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 116-120.

⁶ Barnouw, "Propaganda at Radio Luxembourg," 192-197.

⁷ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 126; Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 87.

The British Broadcasting Company initially presented a typical gendered environment when it was founded in 1922. This included hiring women for clerical positions, and men for engineering ones. The decisions the BBC made in filling particular jobs, especially with regard to gender, are illustrative of the era and shed light on equality issues that are still evident within the organisation. However, as a new technology, some job categories did not necessarily fall into familiar gendered patterns, and a range of roles remained gender-neutral. When the organisation transformed into the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1927, the BBC began to consciously model and compare its practices and policies more closely with the British Civil Service. The 1935 Ullswater Report that preceded charter renewal in 1937 further linked BBC practice with the Civil Service, especially with regard to recruitment. However, BBC norms did not always tally with the more conservative attitudes of the Civil Service towards its female staff. Examining how the BBC dealt with these grey areas helps to illustrate how job categories and industries historically become gendered, and how crises such as war reshape the boundaries in gendered organisations. Research by other scholars has demonstrated that although the Second World War moved the Civil Service towards a more equal workplace, its gendered structure changed very little.⁸ In contrast, the BBC's wartime experience allowed the Corporation to break free of some of the more restrictive practices that the Civil Service followed, such as the marriage bar, and that clashed with the BBC's ethos.⁹ Changes in the gendered nature of programming jobs, such as announcing and producing, administrative roles, and technical positions are explored in this thesis.

In the inter-war years, the BBC employed women in a variety of roles across the whole organisation. However, staff members in supporting functions, such as typists, telephone operators, and filing clerks, were predominantly female.¹⁰ Even university-educated women often entered the Corporation through the clerical ranks.¹¹ Despite these limitations, as Kate Murphy has demonstrated in her work on the early years of the BBC, the Corporation under its first Director-General (DG), John Reith, demonstrated a progressive approach towards female staff. During his tenure, three women had risen to

⁸ Helen Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: Women's Work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900-55* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016); Mark J. Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining: The Struggle to Maintain a Stable Workforce and Service in the British Post Office During the Second World War," *Essays in Economic & Business History*, no. 1 (2013); Mark J. Crowley, "Women Post Office Workers in Britain: The Long Struggle for Gender Equality and the Positive Impact of World War II," *Essays in Economic & Business History*, no. 1 (2012).

⁹ Memo, 26-8-42, DDSA to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1," (BBC WAC R49/565/1, 1942-1943).

¹⁰ Kate Murphy, *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC* (London: Palgrave Macmillian, 2016), Chapter 2.

¹¹ See Chapter Two for example, page 69.

the level of Departmental Director.¹² Reith even declared that there was no reason why women could not rise to the top executive posts – although he qualified this statement by doubting that women with the right qualifications could ever be found.¹³ Reith's statement embodied the BBC's pre-war approach to female staff – high standards and devotion to the Corporation were the keys to a successful career at the BBC. High educational achievements were also paramount in many areas.

THE BBC AT WAR

During the war, the BBC worked in conjunction with various government agencies to boost morale, and to model public behaviour.¹⁴ Internally like many institutions during the war years, the BBC itself was being reorganized by shifting workplace demographics.¹⁵ As this research will show, the war provided women in the BBC with greater access to technical positions, manual positions, and administrative roles. Women also increased their overall presence within the organisation, rising from one third of the workforce to over half. As male conscription came into full force, a dwindling number of men were available to fill vacancies in BBC divisions such as Engineering. Once the sole province of male staff, the Engineering Division began recruiting women to work in control rooms, studios and transmitters in the summer of 1941.¹⁶ The Administration Division also struggled to find qualified male staff and began recruiting a limited number of women to fill open administrative positions. Established female staff began to rise in the ranks in areas that had previously only selectively offered opportunities to women.¹⁷

The Corporation had been planning for the inevitability of war from 1938 and had expected the sudden exodus of male staff for the services. However, the institution of the women's labour draft in March of 1942 threw the BBC into disarray, as large numbers of its female clerical staff fell under conscription and direction. Subsequent recruiting difficulties resulted in staff shortages. These shortages led the BBC to revise its hiring practices of clerical staff to include women under and over the draft age, to establish a training programme, and to employ part-time staff. Added to this stress was the expansion of programming. In order to analyse these evolving strategies, the recruitment practices in the Engineering, the Administration, and the Overseas Services Division, and European Services Division will be examined by comparing the methods of recruitment and interactions with the government

¹² Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, Chapter 6.

¹³ "Staff Policy, Women Assistants," (BBC WAC R49/940, 1926).

¹⁴ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, for food and fuel economy campaigns see 70-99, for employment morale see 121-123.

¹⁵ "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women," (BBC WAC R49/177, 1943-1945).

¹⁶ "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators," (BBC WAC R13/80/1, 1941);

"Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2," (BBC WAC R13/80/2, 1942).

¹⁷ "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2," (BBC WAC R49/561/2, 1942).

agencies that regulated hiring practices. Differing selection processes and sources of labour pools will also be explored.

Despite long-standing academic interest in women's wartime work, women in non-industrial occupations have received limited coverage, although a significant body of research has explored the gendered development of office work outside of the war years.¹⁸ The BBC's role in sustaining morale and informing the public has also been a part of the larger discussion of the British home front. However, outside a few outstanding studies, the Corporation has remained a sidelight, or only part of a larger study.¹⁹ For the BBC, the Second World War was transformative in many ways, and many of the wartime changes became permanent. Mixed programming was increasingly abandoned in favour of specialised programme streams, strict scheduling was adopted, language services multiplied, and the BBC began an open-source intelligence gathering service.²⁰ This diversification of BBC programming, as well as increases in staff numbers, was not substantially reversed at the war's end. The discussion on language-dependent services such as the Monitoring Service, the Overseas Services, and the European Services will explore the different set of problems that arose over issues of gender and nationality, including special concessions made for women with young children.

This thesis argues that the increased use of womanpower at the BBC necessitated by the Second World War permanently altered some of the more restrictive aspects of the gendered structure of the Corporation, leading to fuller integration of women within the staff structure. Societal and structural constrictions remained or re-emerged after the war and prevented some women from reaching their full potential in the post-war environment. But despite these set-backs, women did retain some of the expanded opportunities, and gender-neutral job categories increased. This thesis thus builds on the groundwork already laid by researchers in the fields of labour history, social history, and feminist labour history,

¹⁸ Sharon Hartman Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter: Gender, Class, and the Origins of Modern American Office Work, 1900-1930* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1992); Kenneth Lipartito, "When Women Were Switches: Technology, Work, and Gender in the Telephone Industry, 1890-1920," *The American Historical Review*, no. 4 (1994); Jennifer S. Light, "When Computers Were Women," *Technology and Culture*, no. 3 (1999); Jon Agar, *The Government Machine: A Revolutionary History of the Computer* (Cambridge, Massachusetts and London: MIT Press, 2003); Marie Hicks, *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* (2018).

¹⁹ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*; Briggs, *The War of Words*, III; Webb, *London Calling*; Laura Marie Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring as Open Source Intelligence: The BBC Monitoring Service During the Second World War" (unpublished PhD thesis, King's College London, 2013).

²⁰ Webb, *London Calling*; Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring "; Michele Hilmes, *Network Nations: A Transnational History of British and American Broadcasting* (New York and Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*.

such as James Hinton, Sonya Rose, and Penny Summerfield.²¹ Although this feminist scholarship will be used in this work, the research will also be informed by other scholarship on gender and the development of workplace organisation. As a white-collar workplace, the wartime BBC, despite its male-dominated hierarchy, was not strictly comparable to unionized factories, and studies exploring women in factory work are not directly analogous. Trade unionism was not a major force within the BBC, even in the Engineering Division, and the first staff association was only formed during the war years. The workplace restrictions and union resistance to female staff noted by other scholars did not affect female staff at the BBC in the same manner. As an organisation, the BBC experience did not conform to that of the Civil Service, nor the industrial workplace. By exploring the contours and complexity of a workplace like the BBC, this thesis will look beyond the narrative of continuity.

LITERATURE REVIEW

THE BBC AND THE SECOND WORLD WAR – BROADCASTING POLICY AND PROGRAMMING

Research into the BBC during the war years has most often focussed on the structure of the organisation, the establishment of specific language services, programming output, and as

²¹ Philippa Levine and Susan R. Grayzel, eds., *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain* (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009); Carol Acton, "'Stepping into History': Reading the Second World War through Irish Women's Diaries," *Irish Studies Review* 18, no. 1 (2010); Harold L. Smith, "The Politics of Conservative Reform: The Equal Pay for Equal Work Issue, 1945-1955," *Historical Journal* 35, no. 2 (1992); Harold L. Smith, "The Problem of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' in Great Britain During World War II," *The Journal of Modern History* 53, no. 4 (1981); Paul Elliott, "The Weak and the Wicked: Non-Conscribed Masculinities in 1940s British Cinema," in *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences since 1914*, ed. Maggie Andrews and Janis Lomas (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014); Gillian Swanson, "So Much Money and So Little to Spend It On': Morale, Consumption and Sexuality," in *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality, and British Cinema in the Second World War*, ed. Gillian Swanson and Christine Gledhill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996); David Cardiff and Paddy Scannell, "'Good Luck War Workers!' Class, Politics and Entertainment in Wartime Britain," in *Popular Culture and Social Relations*, ed. Tony Bennett, Colin Mercer, and Janet Woolcott (Milton Keynes & Philadelphia: Open University Press, 1986); Jose Harris, "War and Social History: Britain and the Home Front During the Second World War," *Contemporary European History* 1, no. 1 (1992); Virginia Nicholson, *Millions Like Us: Women's Lives in the Second World War* (London: Penguin, 2012); William Crofts, "The Attlee Government's Pursuit of Women," *History Today* 36, no. 8 (1986); Rose M. Kundanis, "'Baby Riots' and 'Eight-Hour Orphans': A Comparison of the Images of Child Care in British and U.S. Popular Magazines During World War II," *Women's Studies International Forum* 19, no. 3 (1996); Susan L. Carruthers, "'Manning the Factories': Propaganda and Policy on the Employment of Women, 1939-1947," *History* 75, no. 244 (1990); Penny Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 1998); Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict* (London: Croom Helm, 1984); Sonya O. Rose, *Which People's War? National Identity and Citizenship in Wartime Britain 1939-1945* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003); James Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives: Mass-Observation and the Making of the Modern Self* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); James Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War: Continuities of Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002).

an instrument of propaganda and morale-building.²² Employment policy has received little coverage. As the Official BBC historian, Asa Briggs' third volume, *The War of Words*, in his series *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* specifically covered the war years. *The War of Words* ably outlined the organisational difficulties the Corporation encountered during the war, navigating the reader through the complexities and reorganisations engendered by the war. However, he did not address employment policy or gender to any significant degree. Women were not absent from his account, but the few names included were often fleeting references.²³ Women's history was perhaps an aspect of wartime history that received little attention when *The War of Words* was first published in 1970. However by the mid-1970s the issue of women's roles during the Second World War was an emerging strand of historical research, a fact that Briggs briefly acknowledged in a bibliographical note to the 1992 edition of *The War of Words*.²⁴ Radio's public reception,

²² Nelson Ribeiro, "BBC Portuguese Service During World War II: Praising Salazar While Defending the Allies," *Media History* (2014); Nelson Ribeiro, "A New Medium at War: The Importance of Foreign Radio Reports in Portugal During World War II," *Journal of War & Culture Studies* 5, no. 2 (2012); Nelson Ribeiro, "Objectivity Versus 'Toxic Propaganda': The Case of Transborder Broadcasts to Portugal During World War II," *Interactions: Studies in Communication & Culture* 3, no. 3 (2012); Nelson Ribeiro, "Salazar's Interference in the BBC Portuguese Service During World War II," *Journalism Studies* 11, no. 2 (2010); Kay Chadwick, "Across the Waves: Philippe Henriot's Radio War with the Free French at the BBC," *French Historical Studies* 34, no. 2 (2011); Kay Chadwick, "Our Enemy's Enemy: Selling Britain to Occupied France on the BBC French Service," *Media History* in press (2015); Robert Gildea, "Letters from French Correspondents to the BBC (1940-1943): A Penumbra of Resistance?," *Vingtième Siècle*, no. 125 (2015); G. G. González, "Pawns in a Chess Game: The BBC Spanish Service During the Second World War," *Media History* 21, no. 4 (2014); T. Guerreiro, "BBC Broadcasts to Portugal in World War II: How Radio Was Used as a Weapon of War," *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* 32, no. 1 (2012); Douglas Kerr, "Orwell's BBC Broadcasts: Colonial Discourse and the Rhetoric of Propaganda," *Textual Practice* 16 (2002); Douglas Kerr, "In the Picture: Orwell, India and the BBC," *Literature & History* 13, no. 1 (2004); Jan Lániček, "The Czechoslovak Service of the BBC and the Jews During World War II," *Yad Vashem Studies* 38, no. 2 (2010); G. Milland, "The BBC Hungarian Service and the Final Solution in Hungary," *Historical Journal of Film Radio and Television* 18, no. 3 (1998); Agnieszka Morriss, "The BBC Polish Service During the Second World War," *Media History* 21, no. 4 (2015); Arnd-Michael Nohl, "Changing Expectations: Notes from the History of the BBC's Turkish Service," *Middle East Journal of Culture & Communication* 3, no. 2 (2010); L. Nyre, "BBC Broadcasts to Portugal in World War II: How Radio Was Used as a Weapon of War," *Journalism Studies* 15, no. 2 (2014); Jutta Paczulla, "'Talking to India': George Orwell's Work at the BBC, 1941-1943," *Canadian Journal of History* 42, no. 1 (2007); J. F. Slattery, "Oskar Hugo Zuversichtlich II: A Berlin Listener's Assessment of the BBC's German Service, 1941-1942," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 13, no. 3 (1993); J. F. Slattery, "'Oskar Zuversichtlich': A German's Response to British Radio Propaganda During World War II," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 12, no. 3 (1992); Annabelle Sreberny and Massoumeh Torfeh, "The BBC Persian Service 1941-1979," *ibid.* 28, no. 4 (2008); Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring".

²³ Kate Terkanian, "Women, Wartime and the BBC," *Rundfunk und Geschichte* 41, no. 1-2 (2015).

²⁴ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III. The postscript for the 1992 reprint indicates that no general study of British broadcasting during the war had been published since *War of Words*. Briggs does mention that Siân Nicholas's thesis which, was ultimately *The Echo of War*, was due to be published. In the amended bibliography several books on women and the war are included.

and efforts to use propaganda to boost morale, recruit women into war work, and run various resource-driven public information campaigns, received limited or no mention.²⁵

Siân Nicholas, in *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939-45*, picked up this thread of research and explored the inter-relationship between the government ministries and the BBC in promoting government policy through BBC programming. *The Echo of War* looked at the BBC's relationships and struggles with various government agencies in producing home-front programming throughout the war, and consequently focussed more on programme content than on the BBC as an organisation. The clashes with the government agencies in part stemmed from interference with BBC expertise in the area of producing educational and informative programming, particularly those aimed at women.²⁶ As both Kate Murphy and Maggie Andrews have discussed, BBC's programmes for women in the interwar years were geared towards educating and informing women on food, health, and civic matters.²⁷ Nicholas extensively addressed the BBC's efforts to reach the female audience on issues important to the war effort, the scope of which shifted after female conscription came into force in 1942.²⁸ Nicholas contended that although the BBC maintained an aura of independence, especially with the public, this independence was largely illusory.²⁹ Although *The Echo of War* covered all aspects of the BBC's propaganda efforts and included a detailed analysis of programming for women, there was limited scope to explore the women who were public personalities, as well as those who were valued producers.

Other researchers have explored specific aspects of women's programming during the war years. In a work that covered a much wider sweep of time, Maggie Andrews's book *Domesticating the Airwaves* related how radio, from its early days, became associated with the intimate atmosphere of the home, and represented a middle-class family ideal.³⁰ Andrews's chapter on the war years covered much of the same programming as Nicholas did in the *Echo of War*, with the additional use of material from the BBC's magazines *The Listener* and *Radio Times*, and contemporary observations from the Mass-Observation archives. For Andrews, radio during the war years provided an ersatz domesticity to those

²⁵ Ibid., 6, 101, 106, 156, 188-189, 271-180. Briggs couches these much briefer mentions in BBC reluctance to engage in propagandistic activity towards Britons, especially in regard to responding to German propaganda.

²⁶ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 73.

²⁷ Kate Murphy, "From *Women's Hour* to *Other Women's Lives*: BBC Talks for Women and the Women Who Made Them, 1923-39," in *Women and the Media: Feminism and Femininity in Britain, 1900 to the Present*, ed. Maggie Andrews and Sallie McNamara (New York and London: Routledge, 2014), 31-45; Maggie Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves: Broadcasting, Domesticity and Femininity* (London: Continuum, 2012), Chapters Two & Three.

²⁸ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 116.

²⁹ Ibid., for public perceptions 99, 126, 204-106, for independence 172.

³⁰ Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves*, 242.

separated from their homes and families, and as a result the public world was brought into the domestic environment.³¹ Although Andrews dealt with a wide range of programming produced for women, the increasingly feminine make-up of the BBC staff during the war years was not explored.

In "Pulling our weight in the call-up of women': class and gender in British radio in the Second World War", Joy Leman discussed the BBC's attempt to appeal to a broader range of the listening public.³² In the course of discussing how gender and class issues pressed the BBC to include more regional voices and working-class concerns, Leman highlighted the efforts of producer Janet Quigley.³³ However as the focus of the article remained on programming, a more detailed exploration of women's roles in the wartime BBC was not pursued. Michele Hilmes's article "*Front-Line Family*. 'Women's Culture' comes to the BBC" also examined BBC wartime programming policy. Hilmes argued that the BBC avoided popular American styles of entertainment programming, such as daytime serials, which were more attractive to female audiences, fearing the Americanisation of programme content.³⁴ Hilmes charted how through the exigencies of war, woman-focussed programming began to be heard on some BBC broadcasting strands. Originally intended to air only on the BBC North American Service, the daytime serial *Front-Line Family* was picked up by the Overseas Services and became an audience favourite throughout the Empire.³⁵

The BBC was also instrumental during the war years in maintaining links to colonial out-posts and Commonwealth nations. This was done by expanding the frequency of the English-language Empire Service and developing programming in other languages. In the process, the Empire Service was thereafter collectively referred to as the Overseas Services as it had been divided into regional groupings.³⁶ Emma Robertson has asserted that the BBC's Empire Service used the shared trope of the countryside to promote unity among British Dominions and colonies.³⁷ Ruth Teer-Tomaselli has demonstrated that Dominion

³¹ Ibid., 113.

³² Joy Leman, "'Pulling Our Weight in the Call-up of Women': Class and Gender in British Radio in the Second World War," in *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality, and British Cinema in the Second World War*, ed. Gillian Swanson and Christine Gledhill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 110.

³³ Ibid., 109-108.

³⁴ Michelle Hilmes, "Front Line Family: 'Women's Culture' Comes to the BBC," *Media, Culture and Society* 29, no. 1 (2007): 7-8.

³⁵ Ibid., 14-20.

³⁶ There were initially four regional departments which expanded in 1942 to six regions in the Overseas Services Division and a further five regions in the European Services Division. See Figures 6.1 and 6.2 on page 157 for further details.

³⁷ Emma Robertson, "'I Get a Real Kick out of Big Ben': BBC Versions of Britishness on the Empire and General Overseas Service, 1932-1948," *Historical Journal of Film, Radio & Television* 28, no. 4 (2008): 461-463.

broadcasters such as the South African Broadcasting Corporation used BBC programming, and adopted BBC 'message' programming to their own home front needs.³⁸ Message programmes aired on most BBC programme streams, and provided soldiers and evacuated children with a link to their families back in Great Britain.³⁹ Similarly Simon Potter, Thomas Hajkowski, and Siân Nicholas have established the centrality of the BBC in cultivating Imperial unity and communicating the importance of Empire to the war effort, regardless of how the public and the Empire received the message.⁴⁰

Scholarship on BBC policy during the war years has also concerned the use of music as an instrument of morale. In *Victory Through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music During World War II*, Christina Baade looked at programming that was specifically created for the war effort and the audiences that they served.⁴¹ She also contrasted programmes produced specifically for the Overseas Programmes to those that aired on the Home Service.⁴² Although not strictly addressing gender, the work did highlight women such as popular programme hosts Anne Shelton, Beryl Davis, Doreen Villers, and Vera Lynn, as well as influential Dance Band Organiser Tawny Neilson. Through this focus, Baade demonstrated the increasing prominence of women both in popular programming, and in decision-making roles.⁴³ Baade's study brought to the fore how the government, BBC management, and certain members of the public viewed the importance of musical style on morale, and the gendered nature of these assumptions.⁴⁴

WOMEN AND WORK – CONTINUITY OR CHANGE?

Although the BBC's employment of women during the war years has not received sustained attention, women's participation in the general wartime workforce has been extensively examined. While a general consensus concerning industrial jobs has emerged, more recent work has focussed on other economic sectors and social groups. Britain began conscripting

³⁸ Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, "In Service of Empire: The South African Broadcasting Corporation During World War II," *Critical Arts* 28, no. 6 (2014): 81, 90-94; see 96-97 for message programmes from troops stationed in Nairobi..

³⁹ Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves*, 105-110.

⁴⁰ Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, Chapter Four; Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity*, Chapters Two, Three & Four; Hajkowski, "The BBC, the Empire, and the Second World War."

⁴¹ Christina L. Baade, *Victory through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music in World War II* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 105-106.

⁴² *Ibid.*, 156-157.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 149, for Dance Music Supervisor Dorothy "Tawny" Nielson, 154-172 (Chapter Seven), for women in the Overseas Service, Doreen Villers, Joan Gilbert, Anne Shelton, and Beryl Davis.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 33-40, 133-140. This view was especially prevalent during the North African campaign where blame was laid by both management and the public that this feminine music style was harming troop morale; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 238-239, details BBC managements push for more 'virile' marches, instead of slushy music sung by Vera Lynn.

women into industry and the military two years after the Second World War began.⁴⁵ This unprecedented conscription of female labour, and its long-term social consequences have been the subject of academic debate since the late 1960s. War was studied not only as an aberration from normal social modes, but as either a catalyst for change or as an enforcing agent of continuity. Historians Arthur Marwick and Angus Calder examined the impact of the century's two World Wars, with Marwick seeing war as spurring social change and Calder emphasising continuity between the inter-war years and the post-war years. Both these researchers were associated with the idea of post-war consensus supporting the welfare state.⁴⁶

With renewed interest in feminism developing concurrently, the origins of feminism and its periodic surges were examined by historians, taking in these notions of continuity and change.⁴⁷ Feminist scholarship strove to pinpoint reasons behind the perceived dearth of female activism in the years following the Second World War. The most prolific researcher on women factory workers in the Second World War in Britain was Penny Summerfield. Beginning in 1984 with *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production and Patriarchy in Conflict*, Summerfield consistently held that women's advancements in skilled factory jobs were constrained by a patriarchy that was supported by the government and fostered by the unions, particularly in male-dominated engineering fields.⁴⁸

As Ruth Milkman has argued for the automotive industry in the United States, Summerfield posited that the unions had a strong influence in shutting women out of more lucrative skilled jobs in the post-war era. Summerfield has contended that the male-dominated unions consistently viewed women as competition that needed to be controlled.⁴⁹ Skilled men maintained privileged positions in the workplace by segregating other classes of labourers, such as women, into unskilled and semi-skilled roles. These distinctions not only justified unequal pay grades, but also served to keep women in

⁴⁵ Antonia Lant, "Prologue: Mobile Femininity," in *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality, and British Cinema in the Second World War*, ed. Gillian Swanson and Christine Gledhill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 13-32.

⁴⁶ Angus Calder, *The People's War: Britain 1939-1945* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1969 & 1986), 15; Arthur Marwick, *War and Social Change in the Twentieth Century: A Comparative Study of Britain, France, Germany, Russia and the United States* (London: Macmillan, 1974), x, 2.

⁴⁷ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 1, 184. Summerfield specifically references her work in opposition to Marwick's conclusions; Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves*, 90. Andrews directly refers to Calder in the text and is clearly influenced by his arguments against lasting change; Leman, "'Pulling Our Weight in the Call-up of Women'," 116. Leman mentions Calder's *Myth of the Blitz* in relation to making radio more representative of the nation. Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War*. Hinton indicated his own conclusion's followed Calder's premise that wartime progress had been reversed in the post-war era.

⁴⁸ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 154-168.

⁴⁹ Ruth Milkman, *Gender at Work: The Dynamics of Job Segregation by Sex During World War II* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987), 20, 65; Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 154.

subservient roles.⁵⁰ After encountering heated reactions to her findings from former female war workers, Summerfield undertook a further investigation using oral histories. Published in 1998 in *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives: Discourse and Subjectivity in Oral Histories of the Second World War*, Summerfield reassessed her earlier work, laying open the proposition that women's wartime experiences were not universal.⁵¹

Labour historian James Hinton has suggested that most historians have endorsed Summerfield's original conclusion but termed this view "fashionable". Although generally agreeing with the sentiment, the use of the word fashionable suggested some reservation.⁵² Perhaps this consensus of scholarship on women in factory work has been responsible for the decrease in academic interest in the topic. Instead researchers have begun to delve further into related areas or specific groups of workers. Hinton has charted the rise of the Women's Voluntary Service, and others have examined different women's organisations,⁵³ older female workers,⁵⁴ and the impact of evacuation.⁵⁵ Some research on women and work has also appeared in economic history journals, but these tend to be more quantitative in content.⁵⁶ There is of course a rich body of research on women in the military. However, the main argument that women's status remained unchanged by their participation in the war effort was also evident in these works.⁵⁷

⁵⁰ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 154-168.

⁵¹ Summerfield, *Reconstructing Women's Wartime Lives*, 2-3, 8, 44-75, 284-285. Interestingly, Summerfield had initially relied on a Mass-Observation survey (p. 3) that had backed up her original conclusions. This confirms James Hinton's caution about relying on M-O other than as illustrative examples. Hinton, *Nine Wartime Lives* 3.

⁵² Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War*, vii. Hinton's full quote on the subject is: "By focusing on the wartime activity of WVS this book dwells more on continuity than change, and it tends to lend support to the increasingly fashionable view that neither for women nor for society in general, was the Second World War as transformative an event as has often been claimed. It was peacetime consumer capitalism, not total war, that was ultimately to render obsolete the structures of social authority analysed here."

⁵³ Caitriona Beaumont, "'Where to Park the Pram?' Voluntary Women's Organisations, Citizenship and the Campaign for Better Housing in England, 1928-1945," *Women's History Review* 22, no. 1 (2013).

⁵⁴ Sue Bruley, "A New Perspective on Women Workers in the Second World War: The Industrial Diary of Kathleen Church-Bliss and Elsie Whiteman," *Labour History Review* 68, no. 2 (2003).

⁵⁵ Maggie Andrews, "'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women': A Domestic Response to a National Problem," *Women's History Review* 24, no. 1 (2015).

⁵⁶ Daron Acemoglu, David H. Autor, and David Lyle, "Women, War, and Wages: The Effect of Female Labor Supply on the Wage Structure at Midcentury," *Journal of Political Economy* 112, no. 3 (2004); Robert A. Hart, "Women Doing Men's Work and Women Doing Women's Work: Female Work and Pay in British Wartime Engineering," *Explorations in Economic History* 44 (2007).

⁵⁷ Jeremy A. Crang, "'Come into the Army, Maud': Women, Military Conscription, and the Markham Inquiry," *Defence Studies* 8, no. 3 (2008); Juliette Pattinson, *Behind Enemy Lines: Gender, Passing and the Special Operations Executive in the Second World War* Cultural History of Modern War (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2007); Jamie Burn, "The Women's Land Army in the Second World War," *Hindsight* 15, no. 2 (2005); Gerard J. de Groot, "'I Love the Smell of Cordite in Your Hair': Gender Dynamics in Mixed Anti-Aircraft Batteries During the Second World War," *History* 82, no. 265 (1997).

In addition to women's participation in paid labour, the home front relied heavily on women's voluntary organisations. These organisations filled a vital need in the war effort, and as Maggie Andrews, James Hinton, and Patricia and Robert Malcolmson have demonstrated, the government counted on women to organise and run complex functions such as canteens, emergency shelters, and evacuation billets with limited assistance from the government.⁵⁸ Hinton further discussed how the introduction of the Women's Voluntary Service as a government-funded voluntary organisation bypassed other women's voluntary organisations, and paved the way for the professionalization of these social-welfare services after the war. For Hinton, this professionalization eventually led middle-class women into paid positions in the professions.⁵⁹

An under-studied group of women wartime workers are those employed in white-collar jobs, particularly ones in the public sector. As an organisation, the postal service shared many similarities to the BBC, including turning to female staff to fill gaps left behind by men departing to the services. Mark Crowley's research has explored the increase in female staff at the General Post Office (GPO) during the Second World War, and has concluded that management, convinced that expanding women's roles would result in union dissatisfaction, minimally expanded women's opportunities.⁶⁰ As a result, wartime contracts for non-traditional roles were strictly temporary, and entry into male job categories, such as engineering and telegraphy, were only reluctantly agreed. Some gains were made as protective legislation forbidding women working night shifts was relaxed and part-time work was introduced.⁶¹ Crowley posited that women maintained many of the gains they made during the war even if they were unable to remain in engineering jobs or achieve equal pay.⁶²

A more comprehensive book on women in the Civil Service, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: Women's Work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900-55* by Helen Glew, covered national and local government along with the GPO during the first half of the twentieth century. Particular attention was paid to gender segregation, including the separation of women clerical staff into single-sex administrative units – women's

⁵⁸ Andrews, "'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women'," 113-117; Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War*; Patricia E. Malcolmson and Robert W. Malcolmson, *Women at the Ready: The Remarkable Story of the Women's Voluntary Services on the Home Front* (London: Little Brown, 2013); Julie Summers, *Jambusters: The Story of the Women's Institute in the Second World War* (London: Simon & Schuster, 2013).

⁵⁹ Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War*, for middle-class women's post-war status 40, for professionalization 211-212.

⁶⁰ Andrews, "'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women'," 112-130; Crowley, "Women Post Office Workers in Britain," 77-91; Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining," 53-77.

⁶¹ Crowley, "Women Post Office Workers in Britain," 80; Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining," 57-70.

⁶² Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining," 85-89.

establishments, and the establishment of marriage bar, a policy requiring women to resign on marriage, in the public sector in Britain.⁶³ In her chapters that covered the Second World War, Glew concluded that although the Civil Service still believed that men deserved the best jobs, some progress was made in shifting public policy towards equal pay and opportunity, contradicting earlier assessments regarding equal pay.⁶⁴

Other works have studied the intersection between government departments and mechanisation. Christopher Smith's *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park: A Social and Organisation History, 1939-45* explored the gendered operational divisions at the Government Code and Cypher School (GC&CS) at Bletchley Park. His discussion of gendered job categories and the government's access to language specialists and machine operators highlighted the privileged position government departments had in recruitment.⁶⁵ Building on the theme of women in technical roles, Marie Hicks charted the rise of women's roles in British information technology, and their ultimate displacement, in *Programmed Inequality: How Britain Discarded Women Technologists and Lost Its Edge in Computing* – demonstrated the de-feminisation of computing.⁶⁶ Jon Agar's study of government systems also addressed many of these issues although gender was not a specific focus.⁶⁷ Exploring the contours of BBC employment policy in relation to other white collar occupations will add to a growing body of literature on women in these fields.

Academics have stressed that the notion that social changes were for the duration, played on perceived social anxieties caused by disruptions to family and work life. Some have noted that the decision to allow women expanded job roles, or into the military was approached with caution.⁶⁸ Gender appeared to have been an important consideration on the home front, from union negotiations, to music policy and news-readers. As research conducted by Asa Briggs, Paddy Scannell, David Cardiff, Siân Nicholas, and Christina Baade has demonstrated, the BBC sought to both define and defend its image and reputation, particularly in the pursuit of balanced reporting. The BBC took their mandate of maintaining

⁶³ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, see Chapter One for gendered structures, and Chapters Six and Seven for marriage bar.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 148-149 (equal pay), 236; Smith, "The Problem of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'."

⁶⁵ Christopher Smith, *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park: A Social and Organisational History, 1939-1945* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillian, 2015), see particularly Chapters Two and Three.

⁶⁶ Hicks, *Programmed Inequality*, see Chapter One for discussion of the war years.

⁶⁷ Agar, *The Government Machine*.

⁶⁸ Penny Summerfield, "The Girl That Makes the Thing That Drills the Hole That Holds the Spring . . .": Discourses of Women and Work in the Second World War," in *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality, and British Cinema in the Second World War*, ed. Gillian Swanson and Christine Gledhill (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 42; Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 153-178; Crang, "Come into the Army, Maud'," 381-395; Jeremy A. Crang, "The Revival of the British Women's Auxiliary Services in the Late Nineteen-Thirties," *Historical Research* 83, no. 220 (2010): 343-357; Smith, "The Problem of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'," 652; Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining," 57-58.

public morale very seriously, but they also valued their reputation as a national institution.⁶⁹ Scannell and Cardiff have indicated that the BBC's reputation was predicated on a masculine ideal.⁷⁰ The BBC's determination to maintain this ideal when its independence was being tested by government controls and censorship made maintaining this authoritative image paramount. However, in the process, the role women played internally in the functions of the organisation was obscured. This thesis will explore the ways in which female staff were recruited and contributed to the smooth functioning of the BBC.

METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

Beginning in the early 1970s, sociologist Joan Acker began to explore the role of gender in organisational structures, and how gender divisions affected women's roles within organisations.⁷¹ In discussing gender history, historian Joan Scott also found fault with the Marxist tendency to view gender as subordinate to class-structure and therefore lacking an independent status.⁷² Scott and Acker both pointed to the construction of gender in organisations as a source of control and power. Scott argued that gender distinctions were a product of conflict that were subsequently viewed as consensus, and that the moments of these conflicts were what historians should study.⁷³

Acker's and Scott's perspectives will be used to address both the organisational restructuring at the BBC that dissolved the Women's Establishment, which separated women from the normal hierarchy of the organisation, and the moment of conflict presented by the war. This thesis contends that for the BBC as an organisation, the Second World War presented such a moment of renegotiation of women's role within the organisation. Even though the BBC ultimately remained a male-dominated hierarchy, two of the biggest hindrances to women's full integration within the BBC organizational structure, the marriage bar and the Women's Establishment, were abandoned during the course of the war, never to be re-established. This approach differs from the feminist labour position by establishing that long-term organisational changes occurred and were the result of wartime changes.

As indicated in the Literature Review, women's experiences in the workplace during the Second World War have often been studied with the ultimate aim of explaining the post-war era that follows. Penny Summerfield's conclusion that the war offered women few gains

⁶⁹ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 10-11; Harold Nicolson, "Propaganda," in *The BBC Handbook 1941* (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1941), 27-32.

⁷⁰ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 316.

⁷¹ Joan Acker, "Women and Social Stratification: A Case of Intellectual Sexism," *American Journal of Sociology* 78, no. 4 (1973).

⁷² Joan W. Scott, "Gender: A Useful Category of Historical Analysis," *The American Historical Review* 91, no. 5 (1986): 1053-1075.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, 1068.

in the post-war workforce, and that traditional patriarchal structures were reinforced by the war has proved a powerful message that has perhaps clouded the literature on the war era.⁷⁴ As the editors of *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* have defined this issue: “. . . the mythical differentiation between men and women in relation to war persisted, in part because scholars employed categories that masked the realities and complexities of women's participation in the conflicts.”⁷⁵ By emphasising the continuities between August 1939 and August 1945, the years in between lose significance. However, these dynamic six years deserve to be analysed on their own merits, particularly in an organisation like the BBC that was constantly reinventing itself. Therefore, the methodology this project will follow is chiefly an analysis of BBC and government documents with the aim of uncovering what has been obscured both by the myth-making during the war, and the subsequent assessments of wartime alterations.

However, the project will depart from the strict dependence on official documents and follow a more nuanced approach as advocated by Higonnet, *et. al.* As stated in *Behind the Lines*, women's public status ebbs and flows depending on social constructs and does not follow an absolute trajectory of improvement from era to era.⁷⁶ Perhaps too positivist an approach has led some feminist historians to discount the significance of the changes experienced during the war years. To this end, the issue of gendered assumptions in the formulation of policy decisions within the BBC will be highlighted. How jobs were determined to be men's jobs, women's jobs, and gender-neutral jobs were guided by socially constructed gendered ideals. Due to the constraints placed on the BBC in hiring, established job categories became fluid, and ultimately unsettled. There is ample contemporary evidence that immediately following the war, gender distinctions continued to remain unsettled in those nations affected by the conflict. As an example, Simone de Beauvoir indicated she was partly inspired to write her world-wide best-seller *The Second Sex*, published in 1949, in response to a best-selling American pronatalist tract, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex*, published in 1947.⁷⁷

Oral sources are part of the overall research methodology. Using one of the methods advocated by Paul Thompson in *The Voice of the Past*, both interviews and oral histories will

⁷⁴ Sonya O. Rose, "Review: *The Home Front in Britain: Images, Myths and Forgotten Experiences since 1914*," *Twentieth Century British History* 26, no. 3 (2015): 477. Rose indicated that "[Maggie Andrews's] analysis underscores what other scholars have concluded: that women's status during the war not only did not change as a consequence of it, but that the ideal of domesticity for women was not fundamentally challenged."

⁷⁵ Margaret Randolph Higonnet et al., eds., *Behind the Lines: Gender and the Two World Wars* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1987), 2.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 4-5.

⁷⁷ Simone de Beauvoir, *Extracts from the Second Sex* (London: Vintage Books, 2015), 3-4, 94.

be employed in a supplementary or confirmatory manner.⁷⁸ This supplementary approach will be qualitative, as the sample size of the project interviews is too small to draw any statistically significant quantitative conclusions. The oral testimony or personal stories that originate from other sources cannot be normalised with the project interviews, and therefore will not be used to enlarge the project sample. Additional recollections will be used to add depth to the narrative.

Finally, on the surface the story of the wartime BBC may appear simple, but it is endlessly complex. There are numerous avenues of exploration, necessitating decisions regarding scope. This study does not aim to critique work that concentrates on programming matters during wartime. While, the content and context of what Britons listened and responded to are vital to understanding the era, programming does not tell the whole story of the organisation, and this study looks at the environment in which programmes were developed and produced. Additionally, other studies that have examined women in white-collar jobs have also discussed activism for equal pay. While the BBC did form an employee organisation during the war that was influenced by the Civil Service's Whitley Councils, the BBC Staff (Wartime) Association did not focus on issues of equal pay and was outside of much of the feminist activities of the period.⁷⁹ Appendix Two includes a brief description of the BBC report sent to the Royal Commission on Equal Pay.

Other aspects of the BBC have surfaced during the course of this research that also resonate with the themes that have been explored. One strand of research that did not ultimately fit was an exploration of the creation of the public image of the BBC, and its projection to the British public. However, some ideas had to be put aside for reasons of space. Similarly, there were other women whose careers and experiences at the BBC were as compelling as those who have received particular attention but who did not find their way onto the following pages – Stella Hillier, Doreen Copeland, and Madge Hart are a few such women. Their exclusion does not in any way reflect on their contributions to the history of the BBC, and further research into their work is warranted.

SOURCES

The main sources of research for this project are written archival material, contemporary press materials, and oral histories. All of these sources bring with them different perspectives and pitfalls. In order to mitigate their limitations, it is important to recognise

⁷⁸ Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, Second ed. (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1988), 96, 238-239.

⁷⁹ Sonya O. Rose, "Women's Rights, Women's Obligations: Contradictions of Citizenship in World War II Britain," *European Review of History - Revue européenne d'histoire* 7, no. 2 (2000): 277-289; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, Chapter Five.

differing strengths of the documentation to overcome gaps in knowledge. As R. Kenneth Kirby has indicated when discussing oral histories, the value of a source may not lie in the factual details, but in the social currents that are revealed through the documents or the narratives.⁸⁰

The major archival sources for this project, the BBC Written Archives at Caversham and the National Archives at Kew, hold documents on the administrative functions of the BBC and government ministries. For this reason, they are useful in tracing policy, but are limited in other ways. Files are often redacted and the sense of the everyday can be buried in policy discussions. By cross-checking archival information against each other, or by using oral histories and the press, tensions and strategies can be revealed. Although memoirs and oral histories can be coloured by personal vanity or clouded by the distance of time, and press accounts can carry the possibility of conveying inaccurate or misleading information, they both reveal contemporary concerns and how these concerns evolved over time.⁸¹

Although formulating a complete picture of the past may be elusive, using the sources to both inform and question the narrative results in a more balanced view. In addition, secondary research in related areas has allowed comparisons between the results of this research, while providing a control for methods. Publications by Kate Murphy and Kristin Skoog on women at the BBC offer a comparative look at the years preceding and following the war. Research on other British public organisations, such as Mark Crowley's work on the GPO, Helen Glew's on the Civil Service and the London County Council (LCC), and Christopher Smith's on the GC&CS provide a benchmark to contrast the use of womanpower during the war years at similar institutions.⁸² In addition, research such as Kate Lacey's on German radio and Michele Hilmes's on radio in the United States have also assisted in understanding the British situation within an international context.⁸³ Sian Nicholas' *The Echo of War* provides context on wartime programming.⁸⁴

The most important source of archival material is located at the BBC Written Archives Centre (BBC WAC) in Caversham. The type of material available from the BBC WAC files are correspondence, reports, internal memos, minutes of committee and board meetings,

⁸⁰ R. Kenneth Kirby, "Phenomenology and the Problems of Oral History," *Oral History Review* 35, no. 1 (2008): 25.

⁸¹ Ibid., 33-36.

⁸² Crowley, "Women Post Office Workers in Britain."; Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining."; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*.

⁸³ Kate Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies: Gender, German Radio, and the Public Sphere, 1923-1945*, Social History, Popular Culture, and Politics in Germany (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1996).

⁸⁴ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*.

contracts, and personnel files – which include performance reviews and internal job applications. The categories examined included the Board of Governors (R1), Departmental Files (R13), BBC Policy (R34), Publicity (R44), Staff Policy (R49) and Left Staff (L1). There were limitations with these sources as some information was redacted for confidentiality reasons, and material not deemed significant was routinely purged from the files. As Asa Briggs has noted, the primary documents on the Overseas Services have been particularly affected by this culling of files.⁸⁵ As with all filing systems, the separation of items into specific topic files made finding specific information challenging.

In addition, employee files especially for female staff members were not routinely retained. The rationale for the retention policy does not necessarily appear systematic. As Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley have posited, media archives, in particular, marginalise women as the everyday was not seen to have historical importance.⁸⁶ For instance, there was no file for Gweneth M. Freeman who was Women Staff Administrator Establishment, a position of considerable importance. As Freeman was employed by the BBC for over ten years, the absence of her file seems to belie the notion that files were kept for long-term employees only. In addition, as she held an important position, the absence cannot be strictly attributed to the relative status of her position. The records that do remain tend to highlight career staff who were often more likely to remain unmarried. Despite the limitations on variety, there is a certain advantage in examining a smaller selection. The files do provide evidence on how long-term female employees fared during and after the war in terms of their career progression and aspirations.

Another important archival source for this project is the National Archives at Kew. The BBC worked closely with a variety of government agencies during the war including the Ministry of Information (MOI), the Ministry of Labour and National Service (MOLNS), and MI5. During the war, some BBC staff members were subjected to additional security screening that the Corporation termed “colleging”. Although information on particular individuals is limited, the National Archives files on the origins of the security service’s relationship with the BBC supplied additional information on the security vetting process followed by the BBC. This screening process was particularly important for the Monitoring Service and the European Services Division as both hired many foreign nationals. The MI5 files also provided glimpses into the suspicions that arose between colleagues. Access to Parliamentary debates through

⁸⁵ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 657.

⁸⁶ Rachel Moseley and Helen Wheatley, “Is Archiving a Feminist Issue? Historical Research on the Past, Present, and Future of Television Studies,” *Cinema Journal* 47, no. 3 (2008): 153-156.

Hansard has also exposed how employment and recruitment issues at the BBC assumed national importance and public attention.

Other research institutions provided additional sources of material on the BBC and government regulation. The British Library and the BBC website provided access points for audio material held by the BBC, including oral histories collected by the BBC. In addition, a wide range of contemporary magazines and newspapers were also accessed through the British Library. Magazines including *Radio Pictorial* and *Picture Post*, as well as the BBC's own *Radio Times*, *The Listener*, and *London Calling*, provided material not easily gleaned through BBC or Government files. The BBC publications demonstrated how the Corporation managed its public image, and *Radio Pictorial* and *Picture Post* provided a surprising level of detail regarding job duties and internal organisation. Although *Radio Pictorial* ceased publication when the war started, the magazine provided a number of articles that described job duties and behind-the-scenes occupations in detail not available in BBC files. The Bodleian Library at Oxford University, the Cadbury Archive at the University of Birmingham, and Goldsmith's University have provided access to personal papers of individuals such as BBC Governor Violet Bonham Carter and Daphne Oram.

A number of memoirs have been published by former BBC employees that cover the war years. Even though these types of sources only provided a singular point of view, they were useful in gaining a greater understanding of the working lives of the departments. One limitation was that few memoirs were published by female staff. Olive Shapley, Audrey Russell, and Marjory Todd briefly covered the wartime years in their autobiographies, and Penelope Fitzgerald provided a fictionalised version of the wartime BBC in *Human Voices*.⁸⁷

The interviewees who participated in this project were identified primarily through a solicitation in the BBC pensioners' magazine *Prospero*. Additional contacts have been made through individual referral from researchers, interviewees, and through online enthusiast websites. Details regarding the interviewees are included in Appendix One. In addition to oral history interviews, the internet has led to the establishment of enthusiast websites that include the wartime memories of former BBC employees. Websites such as Old BBC Radio Broadcasting Equipment and Memories (www.orbem.co.uk), Recollections of BBC Engineering 1922-1997 (BBCeng.info), Transdiffusion Broadcasting System (www.transdiffusion.org), the British Entertainment History Project (historyproject.org.uk), the History of the BBC (www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc), and BBC Genome (genome.ch.bbc.co.uk) have proved to be

⁸⁷ Olive Shapley, *Broadcasting a Life* (London: Scarlet Press, 1996); Marjory Todd, *Snakes and Ladders: An Autobiography* (London: Longmans, 1960); Penelope Fitzgerald, *Human Voices* (London: Flamingo, 2003).

excellent resources in fleshing out day-to-day experiences. The genealogy websites ancestry.com and familysearch.org have both been useful for biographical information. Ancestry has been useful in contacting family members of former BBC staff regarding further details about individual BBC careers.

A final difficulty encountered has been the determination of the exact male-to-female staff ratio. A report submitted to the Royal Equal Pay Commission in February 1945 indicated the following: "The numerical strength of the Corporation's staff (including pre-war staff serving with the Forces), as at the 30th December 1944, is about 12,600; 3,200 men and 9,400 women. Before the war out of a total staff of 4,200, 2,850 were men and 1,350 were women."⁸⁸ Within this same file, a follow-up report to the Equal Pay Commission on family allowances indicates that the ratio was closer to 50/50, with 5,384 female staff and 5,007 male staff, and a further 1,967 of unknown gender (see Appendix 2 for details).⁸⁹ Attempts so far to find additional information on how the February 1945 report to the Royal Commission was calculated have not yielded results. It is possible that further information can be found at the National Archives, but the exact gender divisions for the BBC during the war years may be difficult to ultimately quantify.

NOTE ON BBC TERMINOLOGY

The door was thrown open and my colleague said: 'Meet the new B.O!' I was a little taken aback and obviously showed it. But a charming man at the bar handed me a drink, put his arm round me and said: 'Don't worry, my dear. In this organisation we all go by these abbreviations, and after all, I am the war correspondent!'⁹⁰

Oliver Renier and Vladimir Rubenstein included this humorous anecdote in their book on the Monitoring Service, *Assigned to Listen*. Although said in jest, the story exemplifies one of the problems researchers encounter when consulting the BBC archives. Often an abbreviated form of the job title was used for both senders and recipients, which sometimes obscures the writer when promotions or resignations occur. An additional hurdle with the wartime records is that there were two reorganisations that drastically altered job titles. For example, the Director of Staff Administration (DSA) became the Head of Staff Administration (HSA) in 1944. Over the course of twenty years, the head of the Women's Establishment changed names three times – from Women Staff Supervisor (1922-1933), Women Staff Administrator (1933-1941) to Women's Establishment Officer (WEO) (1941-1942). Wherever possible a consistent reference will be maintained, which would mean in the examples above the initials DSA or WEO will be used throughout. This will not always

⁸⁸ Letter, 9-Feb-45, to Secretary to Royal Commission on Equal Pay, "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women."

⁸⁹ Letter, 26-Apr-45, to Secretary to Royal Commission on Equal Pay, *ibid*.

⁹⁰ Olive Renier and Vladimir Rubenstein, *Assigned to Listen: The Evesham Experience, 1939-43* (London: BBC External Services, 1987), 87.

be possible as new positions were also established that changed the nature of some of the jobs, but not always the person who occupied the position. Wherever possible full names of BBC and Civil Service staff members have been used. The BBC, like the government ministries, used initials for forenames, and while sometimes the full names were written, this was not always the case. Although all attempts were made to discover the forenames of individuals, this was not possible in all cases.

CHAPTER OUTLINE

Chapter One: Introducing Women, Wartime and the BBC

This Chapter introduces the topic and explores the historiography and methodology that have influenced the research of this thesis.

Chapter Two: Gender within the Organisation

The discussion focusses on the gendered structure of the BBC as an organisation prior to and throughout the Second World War. The first two sections will discuss the Women's Establishment and the marriage bar and how the war affected these two features of the gendered workplace. The third section of the chapter provides case studies about specific women who filled roles in the expanding gender-neutral categories within the organisation. These include women who worked as announcers, programme hosts, producers, and in administration. These case studies do not focus on particular divisions within the Corporation. The key aspects of this chapter are how gender segregation created a divided workplace, and how the war challenged that structure. An additional aspect concerns the connection between educational level and advancement.

Chapter Three: Solving a Crisis of Staff – Recruitment of Clerical Staff

This chapter discusses how wartime hiring restrictions led the Administration Division to alter its training and hiring methods and criteria. The recruitment strategies and difficulties with the MOLNS will be highlighted. There is also a discussion of new types of job designations, including part-time work, and the development of a training scheme to utilise women who were below conscription age. The recruitment difficulties are indicative of the internal struggles the Administration had in trying to centralise recruitment and eliminate redundancies in the interviewing and hiring processes. Of particular note here is how government restrictions forced the Corporation to adopt new standards, some of them reluctantly. The recruitment and conscription difficulties also illustrate how the BBC expected more from the clerical staff, and how they filled more responsible roles than was apparent to outside organisations like the MOLNS.

Chapter Four: Engineering's Fight for Staff

This focus of this chapter is the decision-making process that led the BBC Engineering Division to make an unprecedented decision to utilise female staff in a variety of capacities. Research indicates that this was driven by internal necessity, outside ministry restrictions, and by the pragmatism of engineering personnel. The inner workings of the Division and its recruitment plans demonstrate that the BBC was in some ways a divided organisation and that some parts of it worked against the others. The Engineering Division proved to be more adaptable in confronting labour shortages. This saw the Division go through a difficult time and become successful due to the willingness of key individuals to go against traditional gendering in the workplace.

Chapter Five: Women Replacements and Their Place in the Engineering Division

This chapter examines the training, placement, and job duties of women recruited into the Engineering Division as Technical Assistants. The establishment of the Engineering Training School, and women's further on-the-job training prospects will also be explored. Women were recruited most heavily into the Operations and Maintenance Department and its associated sections. As a result, this chapter will largely discuss placements in these areas. The exploration of women's roles in the Engineering Division allows the reader to understand how women used their agency in, first, working in a non-traditional environment, and then pushing further by pursuing promotion and education.

Chapter Six: Nationality, Security, and Gender

This chapter details the hiring, job classifications, and workplace accommodations made for women working in the Overseas Services and European Services Divisions. As these Divisions required a great many linguists, the required expertise with spoken language led the BBC to hire large numbers of foreign nationals. This search of qualified individuals intertwined nationality, security concerns, and gender. As a married women's nationality was dependent on the nationality of her husband, questions of employment and promotion, as well as national security, of both native and naturalised staff will be discussed. These Services have been selected due to their expansion during the war, and the recruitment of a high number of female staff members. Women's status can be seen in relief against treatment of foreign nationals. In some cases, women were advantaged over foreign men, due to their ambiguous citizenship status. As with the Engineering Division, women were grouped with other categories of staff needed in a tight labour market.

Chapter Seven: Postscript and Conclusions

Chapter Two GENDER AND THE ORGANISATION

A few weeks before the Second World War began, *Radio Pictorial* published an article on BBC recruitment titled "B.B.C. Jobs Going Begging!" The article suggested a bright young man could secure as a position as a producer in Television Talks earning £6 to £8 per week as a starting salary. The author, Ralph Graves, stated that those who stood the biggest chance of working for the broadcasting corporation were women, as every capable typist was eager to work for the BBC, and that clerical jobs were plentiful. The article divided employment prospects across a gendered spectrum. Technical jobs in the Engineering Division were for men and clerical jobs were for women. What Graves termed non-technical positions in programming and administration were not specifically gendered in the text, but the example of the Television Talks producer suggested that more responsible and higher-earning positions in this category were preferably staffed by men.¹ Graves' description of the employment structure provided a snapshot of an organisation on the eve of an upheaval. Graves, the reading public, and the BBC were unaware that the organisation, recruitment policy, and these neatly divided job categories would be challenged in a few short weeks by the impending war.

This tiered organisational structure described in the *Radio Pictorial* article was not unique to the BBC, but there were some variations that set BBC practice apart from other organisations. Through her work *Behind the Wireless: A History of Early Women at the BBC*, Kate Murphy demonstrated that although dominant in clerical roles, women had also moved into more responsible positions in the 1920s and 1930s, especially in programme production jobs. This more flexible job gendering was not surprising in an emerging field where gender boundaries were not yet fixed. Research on gender in the workplace has noted how gender imbalances within an organisation can be rooted in gendered assumptions within the organisational structure.² As a new technology gender stratification in some areas, like programming, did not have deep roots. In contrast, clerical work and engineering had long histories of gender segregation outside of broadcasting. Clerical work, in particular, would remain a largely female preserve at the BBC throughout the Second World War. However, stresses brought about by wartime working conditions altered the BBC's approaches and policies towards administering clerical staff. This chapter will outline the origins of the BBC's gendered structures and policies in the Administration

¹ Ralph Graves, "B.B.C. Jobs Go Begging!," *Radio Pictorial*, 11 August 1939, 7.

² Joan Acker, "Gender and Organizations," (Springer Science & Business Media B.V. / Books, 1999), 177-194; Joan Acker, "Class, Gender, and the Relations of Distribution," *Signs* 13, no. 3 (1988): 473-497; Joan Acker and D. R. Van Houten, "Differential Recruitment and Control: The Sex Structuring of Organizations," *Administrative Science Quarterly* 19, no. 2 (1974): 152-163.

Division, particularly the Women's Establishment and the marriage bar, and demonstrate how the war ultimately brought both to an end. Programming roles, such as that of Announcer, Programme Host, and Producer, as well as administrative roles, will also be discussed to demonstrate how the war allowed women to progress within the organisation. Changes in opportunities in technical posts in the Engineering Division will be discussed in Chapter 5.

GENDERED STRUCTURES: THE WOMEN'S ESTABLISHMENT

Ralph Graves suggested in his article on BBC jobs that the BBC offered the same level of job security as the Civil Service.³ On a basic level the BBC and the Civil Service did bear striking similarities. Both employed vast numbers of people that worked in virtual anonymity behind the façade of a much more public organisation.⁴ The silent members of the Civil Service supported, and still support, very vocal government ministers, just as BBC staff ultimately supported, and still support, the programming output. The audible manifestation of the BBC, the musicians, programme hosts, announcers, and the programmes themselves, provided few clues about the internal functioning of the organisation. Like many organisations of the period the BBC also operated a separate Women's Establishment. Women's establishments grouped female staff, particularly clerical staff, under a separate umbrella. These divisions often created single-sex office environments with little contact between female staff and their male counterparts. The General Post Office had been so concerned about women being exposed to immoral material that women were not allowed to work in the returned letter section until 1915.⁵ Jon Agar reported that in other Civil Service departments women were closeted away in basements or locked in offices during work hours; women were also required to leave the building earlier than the men, and men needed special permits to bring work to female staff.⁶ Although the BBC did not usually physically separate women and men, the Corporation's adherence to a gendered office structure conformed to standard practice of the day.

The BBC rapidly grew from an organisation of only four employees in late 1922, and women were part of the organisation from the start. F. Isabel Shields was hired by the then General Manager, John Reith, to act as his secretary in 1923.⁷ Caroline Banks was also appointed in 1923. Due to her responsibilities over the General Office and the registry section, Banks was designated Women Staff Supervisor, a position that eventually carried

³ Graves, "B.B.C. Jobs," 7.

⁴ Agar, *The Government Machine*; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*.

⁵ Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 274-327; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 23-24, 29.

⁶ Agar, *The Government Machine*, 61-63.

⁷ Asa Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting*, vol. I, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1961), 198; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 44.

the title of Women's Establishment Officer.⁸ During the era of women's expansion into clerical work, the primary task of this sort of staff position was to deal with welfare issues that were deemed inappropriate for male superiors to address, evolving into a supervisory position over female staff.⁹ However at the BBC, not all female staff were considered part of the Women's Establishment. Women in gender-neutral positions were considered part of the establishments in which they worked. House staff – cleaners, catering staff and other manual workers – were supervised separately in the Department of Office Administration, although the Women's Establishment dealt with any welfare issues House staff might have. The Women's Establishment came to encompass non-salaried women, those paid on a weekly basis. These jobs included women working in duplication, as switchboard operators, as registry clerks, and typists and secretaries.¹⁰ Some of these positions, such as typists, cleaners and catering staff, were also filled by men, although the numbers were low.¹¹

A vast reorganisation and rationalisation of staff in 1942 eventually eliminated the position of WEO, and with it the Women's Establishment. Thereafter weekly-paid female staff were supervised by their particular division. The administrative staff that served under the WEO, the Women Staff Officers (WSOs), remained in service after the reorganisation but were shifted to positions in specific divisions. WSOs were deputies to the WEO in the regions and the areas that were established when the BBC evacuated various departments out of London.¹² Gladys Burton, who was the last WEO, clearly expected to remain on staff and have a role in managing female staff, but traces of her disappeared from the file by the end of 1942.¹³ Although no specific explanation for the elimination of both the Women's Establishment and the WEO was detailed in the policy files, a report produced concerning the reorganisation of the Recruitment Department indicated that one of the several factors at issue may have been duplication of effort caused by maintaining separate recruitment systems for female and male staff.

The use of women in formerly male-only roles in weekly-paid roles such as elevator operators, commissionaires, and drivers created recruitment conflicts as House Staff positions and other weekly-paid roles in Administration and Programmes became effectively

⁸ Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting*, I, 202; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 54. Between 1933 and 1941 the position was retitled Women Staff Administrator.

⁹ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 54-55; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 1-16; Lipartito, "When Women Were Switches," 1085-1090.

¹⁰ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 47-81.

¹¹ Draft Report, 9-Feb-45, to Royal Commission on Equal Pay, "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women."

¹² Memo, 11-Jul-42, GEO to Standard Distribution, "Left Staff, Roberts, Elizabeth Kilham," (BBC WAC L1/129/1, 1941). Dispersal of the Corporation department during the early years of the war made management difficult. WSOs grew out of existing regional Women Staff Supervisors, but there was no clear indication in the file when the titles changed.

¹³ Memo, 6-Mar-42, WEO to DDSA, "Staff Policy, Reorganisation, File 5a," (BBC WAC R49/585/8, 1941-1942).

gender neutral. The old system of having separate recruitment officers for women and men became counterproductive.¹⁴ The main objects of the reorganisation was decentralisation and staff reduction, and a gendered organisational structure in recruitment hindered consolidation. Although triggered by the reorganisation, the BBC might have been moving towards the elimination of the Women's Establishment prior to 1942. Long-serving head of the Women's Establishment, Gweneth Freeman, had been moved to the position of Welfare Officer in 1941. Even though she was initially replaced in the role, the position may have been considered redundant at the point of her transfer.¹⁵ There was also some indication that Freeman's transfer was also part of internal power struggles.¹⁶

Freeman had originally joined the BBC in 1924 as a secretary to Valentine Goldsmith, who was then Assistant Controller of Administration, but left BBC service in 1927. Born in Australia of British parents, Freeman had grown up primarily in the London area and was an experienced secretary. Before re-joining the BBC in 1931, she had worked in Canada for several years.¹⁷ Freeman was a central figure in the formulation and establishment of the BBC marriage bar which will be discussed below. The position of WEO was not equivalent to either the Engineering Establishment Officer (EEO) or the General Establishment Officer (GEO). The EEO and the GEO answered directly to the Director of Staff Administration. The WEO instead reported to the GEO.¹⁸ Helen Glew has noted that in the Civil Service the woman establishment officers held largely ceremonial positions with no real power within the organisation. The position was more for public consumption as a reassurance that these largely middle-class women were being protected in the workplace. The General Post Office eliminated their equivalent post in the 1930s.¹⁹

Freeman's subordinate position in the organisational hierarchy hinted at the ambiguous position the Women's Establishment had within the organisational structure. Female clerical staff operated across all levels of the BBC, but Freeman's own staff consisted of two assistants, a secretary, a short-hand typist and the General Office supervisors. The Registry, Private Branch Exchange (PBX), Library, and Duplicating staff were under the Director of Office Administration. These departments were also exclusively supervised and staffed by women, although there was one male night PBX Operator and each department

¹⁴ Report, circa May-42, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Reorganisation," (BBC WAC R49/564, 1942).

¹⁵ "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1," (BBC WAC R49/561/1, 1929); "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

¹⁶ Ralph Wade, "Early Life in the B.B.C.," (c. 1952), Chapter Nine: Early War Years.

¹⁷ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 55-56; Freeman, Willaim Edward, "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911," (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives of the UK, 1911).

¹⁸ Annual Review 1933, "Left Staff, Clarke, Douglas Hardcastle," (BBC WAC L1/1131/1, 1924).

¹⁹ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 70.

had messenger boys.²⁰ Recruitment, record-keeping, and other routine matters for most of these departments was conducted by the Women's Establishment. While the Women's Establishment may have exercised considerable power over the women themselves, Freeman acted more as a consultant to departmental heads with regards to matters concerning female staff. With the evacuation of many BBC departments from London, the increased pace of recruitment, and the push towards decentralisation, the WSOs assumed greater significance within the organisation, and authority over their actions became contested. By this time, Freeman had also been replaced with an individual much more accustomed to proposing and pushing for change, Gladys M. Burlton.

Burlton already had a long-standing association with the BBC. She had been appearing intermittently on programmes, particularly regarding retail sales, since 1924, and continued to make the occasional on-air contributions in the post-war era.²¹ Burlton had even been consulted on recruitment issues prior to her engagement as WEO. Like Freeman, Burlton had been born overseas, in India as opposed to Australia, to British-born parents. Burlton's father had been a Superintending Engineer for the Public Works Department in Madras, India.²² Again like Freeman, the family returned to Britain in the early 1900s.²³ By 1911, Burlton was working as a secretary for the University of London, and by the end of the decade had become Director of Training at Selfridge's Department Store.²⁴ She had a strong entrepreneurial bent and as early as 1919 was publishing articles on sales techniques, later publishing several books on the topic – *Retail Selling* (1927) and *Warehouse Selling* (1940).²⁵ In the interwar years, Burlton ran an employment agency, particularly finding placements for secretarial staff.²⁶ Just before joining the BBC, Burlton worked for the Civil Service as an Establishment Officer in Postal Censorship.²⁷

Decentralisation must have been under discussion in the BBC even before Robert Foot, General Manager of the Gas Light and Coke Company, was hired as an outside expert

²⁰ "BBC Staff List," (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1938), 31-41. Registry (filing) staff were all female, and the Post Room staff were all male. The Office Administration Department also included House Staff.

²¹ The first programme was 'Psychology and the Shop Assistant', on Saturday, 20 September 1924 at 16.10, and the last was on 'Woman's Hour' on Friday, 3 May 1957 at 14.00, on the topic of 'Nainsooks and Madapollams'. In total BBC Genome lists twelve programmes on which she appeared. "BBC Genome: Radio Times 1923-2009," British Broadcasting Corporation, <http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/>.

²² "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911."

²³ The India List indicated that Charles H.B. Burlton was in post until 1903. *The India List and India Office List 1905*, (London: Harrison and Sons, 1905), 452; "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911."; "Inwards Passenger Lists," ed. Board of Trade: Commercial and Statistical Department and successors (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives of the UK, 1901).

²⁴ 1911 Census "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911."

²⁵ "Problems of Selling," (1926).

²⁶ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 111.

²⁷ "BBC Genome: Radio Times 1923-2009"; Note, c. June-41, A.C. Cameron, "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1," (BBC WAC L2/210/1, 1941-1972).

in October 1941 to evaluate and streamline the administrative systems of the organisation.²⁸ Within weeks of being hired in September 1941, Burlton was already instructing her staff to “. . . speed up the machinery by cutting out all unnecessary or merely formal reference to this office, each of my assistants taking the maximum responsibility for the work assigned . . .”²⁹ Burlton spent much of her short tenure as WEO establishing procedures for the recruitment, evaluation, and remuneration of staff. This included creating form letters, checklists, contracts, and procedures to handle tasks such as paperwork for sick leave and changes in base. These were designed to provide the WSOs with clear guidelines and the ability to act independently of the central office. Several specialist teams were created – the Routine Unit handled standard paperwork and documentation, and another team conducted recruitment tasks such as interviewing, collecting references, and liaising with local MOLNS offices.³⁰ These changes effectively decentralised the work of the Women's Establishment, paving the way for its dissolution.

Soon local executives began to express concern that their authority was being challenged. George Allport, the Monitoring Service Executive, complained that instead of merely offering her opinion on the suitability of new candidates, Elizabeth Redfern, the Women Staff Supervisor based in Evesham, had written on a few occasions that the appointments were confirmed, exceeding her authority. Allport further stated that “[t]here has never . . . been any question that the person who should officially say whether the member of staff concerned is to be confirmed or not must be myself, after taking into account the views expressed by the Head of the Unit and Miss Redfern.”³¹ Burlton managed to smooth out relations with Allport, but another dispute arose with the West Region Executive concerning under whose authority the West Region WSO should be acting. The question was triggered by the form letters Burlton had begun distributing that appeared to suggest that WSOs in the Regions and Areas would be signing letters under the auspices of the WEO in London. Signing under the authority of the main office in London was seen to undermine the local executives who saw themselves as responsible for the WSO posted in the Regions and Areas.³² This question of authority was particularly important when the executive felt unable to reprimand staff. In an unpublished memoir, Ralph Wade, who was then Area Director for Evesham, commented on his inability to deal with a problematic staff

²⁸ Foot would later be named joint Director-General in January 1942 when Frederick Ogilvie resigned.

²⁹ Memo, 2-Oct-41, WSA to WSOs and WSSs, "Staff Policy, Women's Establishment Officer, Administration Procedure," (BBC WAC R49/944, 1940).

³⁰ Memo, 24-Nov-41, ADPA(OS) to EmpireEx, ONEx, LA&NEEx & OCEX; 5-Dec-41, AWEO to Standard Distribution, *ibid*.

³¹ Memo, 18-Oct-41, MSEx to WSA, *ibid*.

³² Memo, 20-Nov-41, WRD to C(A), *ibid*.

member in his area as she was technically on the London staff of the Department of Staff Administration.³³

Although the discussion surrounding the issue of the signatures was resolved, the West Region Executive continued to question who the WSO stationed in Bristol reported to – was it the Regional Executive or the WEO in the London office? He also bristled at the suggestion that the Routine Unit would issue contracts to weekly-paid clerical staff, something that he usually handled.³⁴ These clashes with the Regional and departmental Executives possibly arose from Burlton's inexperience with the Corporation and its procedures. Burlton's radio broadcasts describing her working experiences projected the image of an individual who was willing to innovate rather than merely follow standard procedure, a trait that would have been unwelcome in some corners of the BBC. Asa Briggs has noted that the Regional Directors were especially sensitive during the war regarding any hint of erosion of their influence and authority, therefore these complaints were part of the insecure wartime atmosphere.³⁵ However, these disputes also pointed out that the Executives were not accustomed to the WEO leading in these areas of administration. Gweneth Freeman may have held sway and influence, but the reaction of the Executives suggest that Burlton was exercising power in unfamiliar, and unwelcome, ways.

An internal memo dated 11 July 1942 stated that "[f]ollowing on the reorganisation, the post of Women's Establishment Officer disappears. Miss Burlton will continue as a Senior Member of the Staff Department."³⁶ With this brief announcement, the Women's Establishment ceased to be. The WEO's staff was dispersed to other branches of the organisation. Burlton remained with the Corporation until the end of the year, but never assumed another title, although in the absence of her personnel file the exact date of her departure is unknown. The war had highlighted how this vestige of an earlier era was a cumbersome impediment to recruitment and management.

³³ Wade, "Early Life in the B.B.C.," Chapter Three: The Tentacles Spread.

³⁴ Memo, 1-Dec-41, WREx to WEO, "Staff Policy, Women's Establishment Officer, Administration Procedure."

³⁵ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 541-543.

³⁶ Memo, 11-Jul-42, GEO to Standard Distribution, "Left Staff, Roberts, Elizabeth Kilham."

GENDERED STRUCTURES: THE MARRIAGE BAR

The practice of requiring women to resign upon marriage was first established in Britain at the GPO in 1876. The marriage bars came into wider use in both the public and private sectors after 1900, and the interwar years, 1920s and 1930s, saw a peak in the widespread imposition of the bar. During the First World War bars were for the most part suspended. The introduction of the Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of 1919 was at first thought to abolish marriage bars in the public sector. However, the Civil Service was exempted from enforcement, and the act was deemed to be voluntary on the part of the employer.³⁷ The BBC did not enact a marriage bar during the first ten years of its establishment, and the decision to establish one in 1932 appeared anomalous in light of the Corporation's previous policies towards female staff. The initial ruling on the matter came at the insistence of the Board of Governors, rather than through the management Control Board, and implementation was not immediate. Although proposed at a Governors' meeting in October 1932, BBC staff members were not officially informed of the new policy until August 1933.³⁸ In her discussion on the BBC marriage bar, Kate Murphy noted the lack of commitment on the part of some BBC administrators, and the tension that the institution of the bar engendered within the Corporation.³⁹ The BBC's experience with the their short-lived marriage bar impacted the wartime organisation in two ways. The first concerned the suspension and later abolition of the bar during the war, and will be discussed below. The second, the impact of the marriage bar on wartime recruitment, will be discussed in Chapter Three.

When first established in 1933, the BBC marriage bar was not considered to be an absolute bar on the employment of married women. Women in the upper grades who were considered an asset to the Corporation were generally allowed to remain in post. Others in lower grades deemed less essential could petition to remain in service. The Civil Service also allowed women of exceptional ability to continue in more responsible positions, but had an absolute bar in the lower grades.⁴⁰ The BBC Marriage Tribunal system set up in 1933 to assess applicants wishing to remain in BBC employment appeared more lenient than the equivalent Civil Service system, as the BBC approved sixteen out of twenty-eight

³⁷ Memo, 17-Apr-42, WEO from DDSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 3," (BBC WAC R49/371/3, 1939-1946). Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 178-206; Kate Murphy, "A Marriage Bar of Convenience? The BBC and Married Women's Work 1923-39," *Twentieth Century British History* 25, no. 4 (2014): 533-561.

³⁸ Memo, 10-Aug-33, Nicolls to Women Staff, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 1," (BBC WAC R49/371/1, 1928-1935).

³⁹ Murphy, "A Marriage Bar of Convenience?," 533-561.

⁴⁰ Meta Zimmeck, "Strategies and Stratagems for the Employment of Women in the British Civil Service, 1919-1939," *The Historical Journal* 27, no. 4 (1984): 904; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 184.

applications over a four-year period.⁴¹ In the interwar years the Civil Service had only approved the retention of a handful of women in an organisation that was far larger than the BBC.⁴²

The Marriage Tribunal reports indicated that knowledge of the job, or participation in an extensive project, were not sufficient to justify continued employment after marriage.⁴³ Women who wanted to work for only a few years after marriage were undesirable, and extra points were allotted to women who expressed an unlimited desire to dedicate their service to the Corporation.⁴⁴ Women in clerical roles were deemed replaceable even if replacement would require extensive retraining and consequently greater expense to the Corporation.⁴⁵ This attitude of dispensability towards women with years of experience with the Corporation's systems conflicted with the BBC's feeling that their systems were unique and therefore required special training.⁴⁶ This conflict was apparent in that special rules towards different categories of women workers also in weekly-paid categories – charwomen, waitresses, and television make-up and wardrobe assistants – were established to allow the employment of married women in these areas on the basis that women traditionally filled this roles. This aspect will be discussed further in Chapter Three.⁴⁷

In the years immediately preceding the Second World War, the BBC administration appeared more conflicted about the necessity of the bar. In Glew's account of the Civil Service, none of these misgivings were apparent. Indeed, the BBC files obliquely demonstrated that the British Treasury Department was exerting its influence on the BBC to maintain the bar. By 1937, the Marriage Tribunal system became contentious and unpopular. An absolute bar for all women below the monthly-paid C grade was approved in its stead. The Director of Staff Administration, William S.J. Pym, delayed issuing a staff memo regarding an absolute bar, effectively delaying its implementation, until after the

⁴¹ Memo, 10-Nov-37, Women Staff left for Marriage (Clerical), "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2," (BBC WAC R49/371/2, 1936-1939).

⁴² In an internal BBC memo indicated that the Civil Service had retained only eight women after marriage from approximately 1933 to 1937; Memo, 10-Aug-37, DSA to C(A), *ibid.*; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 203. Glew stated that there were 11 exemptions granted between 1934-1939.

⁴³ Tribunal Minutes, 25-Feb-37, 5-Mar-37, 2-Jun-37, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, Tribunals," (BBC WAC R49/372, 1934).

⁴⁴ In early memos there is discussion about women "wanting to make a convenience" of the Corporation by staying on; Memo, 16-Aug-32, PerEx to A(C), "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 1." However in practice, the Tribunal was more sympathetic and especially in the early Tribunals recommended approval of several women who expressed a desire to stay on two years or less. Tribunal Minutes, 16-Jan-35, 17-Feb-35 Tribunal, 25-Feb-37, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, Tribunals."

⁴⁵ Memo, 14-Jun-37, DSA to C(A); Minutes, 2-Jun-37, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 1."

⁴⁶ Memo, 14-Sep-38, GEO to TelEx, "Departmental, Television, Women Staff, File 1b," (BBC WAC R13/426/2, 1937).

⁴⁷ Memo, 26-Jan-38 (wardrobe), 3-Oct-38 (make-up), 10-Oct-38 (waitresses), "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

Treasury has approved the wording of a reference to Civil Service practice.⁴⁸ Pym, along with Gweneth Freeman, was instead advocating the abandonment of the bar. The suggestion was dismissed from above not on principle but on timing.⁴⁹ This issue of timing may have concerned the BBC Charter Renewal as the Ullswater Report on Charter renewal devoted a section to employment issues.⁵⁰ In a memo from Pym to Basil Nicolls, then Controller of Administration, Pym directly referenced a discussion with the Treasury questioning whether the Treasury would object to the BBC lifting its marriage bar. Although the Treasury reply indicated that it was a matter for the BBC to decide, Pym inferred that the government would prefer that the BBC maintained the bar.⁵¹

The memo referencing Treasury opinion was issued in May 1939, and a response indicated that the Director-General would reconsider the question of the marriage bar in October.⁵² The outbreak of war in September postponed any final decision for the duration of the war, but as a consequence of the war an immediate suspension of the marriage bar was issued. In comparison, although both the London County Council and the Civil Service ultimately suspended their bars as well, the LCC's suspensions occurred in stages and the Civil Service waited until 1940.⁵³ Pym seemed glad to put the issue to rest at least temporarily. In the days after the suspension of the BBC marriage bar was agreed, Kathleen Lines in the Picture Section wrote to Pym indicating that news of the bar's lifting had already unofficially spread across the organisation. Pym acknowledged that the report she was to prepare on the "married woman question" would be unnecessary at the present time, and that she could "... reserve [her] ammunition till after the war."⁵⁴

The lifting of the marriage bar was initially not applied equally across the organisation. Pre-war planning had grouped staff into three categories with Category C staff designated redundant to wartime operations. To maintain resettlement rights after the war, Category C staff were required to enter into strictly defined categories of war service jobs.⁵⁵ Women who were classified as essential to the Corporation, Categories A and B, were entitled to remain on staff until peace was declared. Women who were classified as

⁴⁸ The DSA (Pym) wrote a letter to a Parker at the Treasury asking if the wording in the proposed memo accurately reflected Civil Service practice. Parker replied on 13 December 1937 with suggested changes to the text which were duly incorporated by Pym; Letter, 18-Nov-37, Parker (Treasury) from Pym, *ibid*.

⁴⁹ Memo, 2-Nov-37, WSA to DSA, *ibid*.

⁵⁰ "Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935," ed. Post Office Telegraphs (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), 12-15.

⁵¹ Memo, 24-May-39, DSA to CA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

⁵² *Ibid*.

⁵³ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 205. See Crowley who disputes the timing of the Civil Service decision; Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining," 58-59.

⁵⁴ Letter, 11-Sep-39, Lines to Pym; 13-Sep-39, Pym to Lines, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 3."

⁵⁵ Robert Mackay, "'No Place in the Corporation's Service': The BBC and Conscientious Objectors in the Second World War," *Media History* 12, no. 1 (2006): 38-39.

non-essential and placed in Category C received different treatment in terms of the marriage bar, although there were negative consequences for all three classes of women. Automatic retention of Category A and B translated into a virtual compulsion to remain in BBC service. As women were no longer forced to resign, Category A and B women who voluntarily resigned during the war forfeited receiving security pay which had been paid to women when resignation was compulsory. Security pay was a payment intended to compensate women for the loss of interest on money that they had been required to put into their pension fund over the course of service. The termination of their service forced them out of the pension fund, and all contributions were returned originally without the extra compensation.⁵⁶ This new standard proved to have significant financial consequences for women who had been with the Corporation for many years.

The Scottish Regional Director wrote to Freeman about the case of a Miss Ogg who had resigned on marriage in March 1940. As a consequence of her resignation, Ogg, who was in Category A, was being denied £29 that would have been due under peacetime rules. A dismayed Ogg stated she would not have resigned if she had known the consequences. It transpired that although management had been informed of the new wartime rules concerning security pay, female staff members had not. A series of memos about the BBC's legal obligations to Ogg ended with the Corporation grudgingly issuing her an *ex gratia* payment in an equivalent amount to the lost security pay. The policy was also then made known to all female staff.⁵⁷

Conversely, Category C women were still subject to peacetime rules and were therefore required to resign upon marriage, even if they were not on active BBC service.⁵⁸ This anomaly remained in place until the Control of Engagement Order came into force in 1942, and threatened to involve more than the twenty-four women then in Category C.⁵⁹ Gladys Burlton wrote an impassioned memo on the issue that included a scathing attack on the bar in general.⁶⁰ The Corporation agreed in May 1942 to treat all categories of staff in a similar manner, and put off the question of resignation until the status of the marriage bar was resolved at end of the war.⁶¹ In the end, the BBC permanently lifted the bar in 1944.⁶²

Both the Women's Establishment and the marriage bar had a more profound effect on the working lives of women in lower grades, and consequently sent a negative message

⁵⁶ WSI-8, 2-Oct-39, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 3."

⁵⁷ Memo, 23-Mar-40, SD to WSA, *ibid*.

⁵⁸ WSI-8, 2-Oct-39, *ibid*.

⁵⁹ Memo, 28-Apr-42, CA to DG, *ibid*.

⁶⁰ Memo, 20-Apr-42, WEA to DDSA, *ibid*. There are two versions of Burlton's memo in the file, with a later toned-down version that appeared to have been scaled back at the request of the DSA.

⁶¹ WSI-152, 7-May-42, *ibid*.

⁶² WSI-332, 30-Oct-44, *ibid*.

to women about their worth to the Corporation. As Kate Murphy has noted, crossing over to the monthly-paid grades took women out of the Women's Establishment and conferred a higher status on staff members. Murphy also indicated that Freeman exerted a tremendous amount of informal influence over the working lives of weekly-paid women staff.⁶³ In an unpublished account of her experience at the BBC in the 1930s, Clare Lawson Dick, who would eventually become the first women controller of Radio 4, specifically mentioned her time within the Women's Establishment. Lawson Dick expressed bitterness towards Freeman's ability to thwart even applying for positions that would have moved her outside the control of the Women's Establishment.⁶⁴

Lawson Dick's personnel file bears out these resentments, as Lawson Dick had been chastised by Freeman for not following proper procedures when applying for a job in another department.⁶⁵ In another instance, Freeman failed to support an applicant to the Marriage Tribunal who had married in secret. Freeman also suggested that the marriage bar could be used as a means of constructive dismissal, stating that "... by not allowing automatic retention after marriage, we were enabled to dispense with some of the less satisfactory employees, whose work or health was not so poor as to justify dismissal."⁶⁶ Lawson Dick also discussed how the marriage bar and its application prevented the organisation from hiring a talented friend of hers.⁶⁷ Notes in the Married Women's Policy files reveal that Freeman had misgivings about her self-perceived role in establishing the bar, although it is doubtful that her early interventions were the sole cause of the bar's establishment.⁶⁸ The coming of the war and the loosening of restrictions on matrimony, and later the loosening of control over career moves, gave individual women more control over their professional lives.

The impact of the abolishment of the Women's Establishment and the marriage bar on women's relative status within the Corporation is difficult to determine. There was some indication through a 1945 report to the Equal Pay Commission that the BBC recognised that even if its non-manual positions paid men and women equally, women were perhaps not advancing within the Corporation in a commensurate manner.⁶⁹ The advent of the

⁶³ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 53-58 (Freeman), 74-79.

⁶⁴ Clare Lawson Dick, "Women's Place Is in the Wrong: Part II," (1979). This piece was amongst Lawson Dick's private papers and appears to be a portion of her oral history interview for a BBC project.

⁶⁵ Note, 30-Jul-36, Freeman to Hort, "Left Staff, Dick, Clare Lawson," (BBC WAC L2/53/1, 1935-1976).

⁶⁶ Memo, 26-8-32, AC to CA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 1."; Notes, c. 1938, WSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

⁶⁷ Lawson Dick, "Women's Place Is in the Wrong: Part II."

⁶⁸ Notes indicated that Freeman felt she, in conjunction with Valentine Goldsmith, had brought the issue up to the Board of Governors in the first place. Report, c. Oct-38, WSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

⁶⁹ Memo, 16-May-44, DSA to DG, "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women."

Second World War did assist the BBC in moving away from overtly gendered organisational structures, as reorganisation eliminated the Women's Establishment, and wartime staffing shortages ultimately resulted in the abolition of the marriage bar. Clare Lawson Dick suggested that: "[t]he old fashioned unit under the command of its Women's Staff Supervisor was swept away soon after the outbreak of war and a more satisfactory organisation was introduced."⁷⁰

NON-TECHNICAL JOBS

The 1935 documentary *BBC: The Voice of Britain*, produced by the GPO Film Unit, portrayed a day-in-the-life of the Corporation and inner workings of Broadcasting House. The hierarchy represented a male-dominated organization, with female staff almost silently sorting, filing, typing, and entertaining. In one scene a room of female typists sat with their backs to the camera, while men's voices are heard dictating the words being typed. Occasionally other women crossed the screen, entering a studio or taking notes in a control room.⁷¹ Although not noted in the film, in reality women filled more than just support roles. Women were play-readers, producers, librarians, and three had risen to Director-level posts.⁷² With the outbreak of war, labour shortages and broadcasting priorities allowed women to make inroads in greater numbers into areas from which they previously had limited access. This was particularly true in the areas of announcing, production, and administration. The following section will explore this expansion by highlighting specific individuals, and their career paths within the Corporation.

THE NEW VOICE OF BRITAIN – WOMEN ANNOUNCERS

Prior to the start of the Second World War, the BBC had followed a strict policy of anonymity for its announcing personnel.⁷³ As Asa Briggs has noted, Reith was motivated by a desire to protect the Company's image in 1924, when the policy was instituted. Announcers, as opposed to programme hosts, read the news and made announcements, and were expected to be dispassionate and impartial. This all-male group was designated the "collective voice" of the BBC, a term that appears in many internal policy documents. This collective voice projected a cultured and well-educated persona that adhered to precise forms of diction, delivery, and pronunciation, with the avoidance of distinct regional accents. The announcers also had to collectively embody the image of humble public servants by shunning the

⁷⁰ Lawson Dick, "Women's Place Is in the Wrong: Part II."

⁷¹ Stuart Legg, "The BBC: The Voice of Britain," (GPO Film Unit, 1935).

⁷² Catherine Murphy, "On an Equal Footing with Men?: Women and Work at the BBC, 1923-1939" (unpublished PhD thesis, Goldsmith's University, 2011), 235-293; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 115-188.

⁷³ Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting*, I, 291-294. Briggs gives a precise date of 16 November 1924 but does not cite a source.

vulgarity of self-promotion, hence the stress on anonymity.⁷⁴ Broadcasting historians Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff have also noted that the collective BBC voice signalled to the public both the authority and respectability of the BBC.⁷⁵

The BBC had attempted to introduce a female announcer in the 1930s, Mrs Sheila Borrett, who was removed from her role after only three months on the air. The public explanation pinned her withdrawal to the tremendous amount of complaints received, particularly from female listeners. As announcing was a sought-after position, there may have also been some internal dissent that the job was given to a married woman.⁷⁶ Contemporary arguments against women announcing often focused attention on the supposed negative qualities in the broadcast reproduction of women's voices, issues of emotionality, and a general lack of authority.⁷⁷ Some researchers have suggested that Borrett's failure was due to her obvious non-masculinity.⁷⁸ Borrett had received advanced promotion and, as the only woman, was discernible from her male colleagues.⁷⁹ As Borrett was identifiable, she was unable to function as part of the collective voice. Announcing remained a gendered occupation at the national level of the BBC at least until late 1939.

During the first weeks of war the BBC had reduced its broadcast output to one programme stream, the Home Service, and shuttered the Television Service. A second radio programme service, the Forces Programme, began in early 1940. The BBC also broadcast outside of Britain through its Overseas Services in English and in other languages. However, the Overseas Services were not audible in Britain. The Overseas Services later divided into the European Services Division and the Overseas Services Division and are discussed further in Chapter Six. By mid-1940, the threat of invasion and the possibility of the Germans hijacking the BBC's broadcasting spectrum, forced the BBC management to publicly name announcers on all its programme outlets.⁸⁰ Although many BBC broadcasters were well-known in the press, their voices were disembodied from their public selves.⁸¹ As a security

⁷⁴ Ibid., 294-295.

⁷⁵ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History of British Broadcasting*, 317-318.

⁷⁶ Memo, 28-Aug-33, DIA to Controller & DG, "Staff Policy, Reorganisation, File 2b," (BBC WAC R49/585/3, 1933).

⁷⁷ Ann McKay, "Speaking Up: Voice Amplification and Women's Struggle for Public Expression," in *Women and Radio: Airing Differences*, ed. Caroline Mitchell (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 22; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 241-245; Anna Karpf, *Archive on 4: Spoken Like a Woman* (BBC Radio 4, 2013).

⁷⁸ Cheris Kramarae, "Censorship of Women's Voices on Radio," in *Gender and Discourse: The Politics of Talk*, ed. Sue Fisher and Alexandra Todd (Norwood, NJ: Ablex, 1988), 243-254.

⁷⁹ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 241-247.

⁸⁰ Memo, 27-Jun- 40, C(P) to Regional Directors, "Policy, Anonymity of Announcers," (BBC WAC R34/254, 1939-1945).

⁸¹ Julia Taylor, "From Sound to Print in Pre-War Britain: The Cultural and Commercial Interdependence between Broadcasters and Broadcasting Magazines in the 1930s" (unpublished PhD thesis, Bournemouth University 2013), 109, 136-139. Wills cigarette cards "Radio Celebrities," ed. W.D. & H.O.Wills (Great Britain 1935). Announcers Stuart Hibberd and Frederick Grisewood are both featured on the first page of this cigarette card album. There is an emphasis on their having attended university, Cambridge for Hibberd, and Oxford for Grisewood.

measure, the government insisted that the British public should be able to associate voices with the names of particular announcers. However, the antipathy to naming announcers was so strong within the Corporation, that the policy continued to be debated by management throughout the war. On 7 June 1940, announcers reading the news began introducing themselves.⁸² By August 1940, the Corporation was promoting announcers through the *Radio Times*. Amongst the twenty-four general announcers listed in the article were three women who will be discussed below. Some of the male announcers were also given the designation of news-reader, a task that had formerly been part of general announcing duties.⁸³

The BBC had departed from its entrenched standards by employing women as announcers. However even during the war, the idea of women regularly reading the news was not even considered on the Home Service.⁸⁴ Women news readers had not been attempted nationally since the Sheila Borrett "experiment".⁸⁵ Interestingly, Borrett would later also become one of the wartime announcers. Her picture was amongst the group of female announcers highlighted in a December 1942 *Radio Times* article under the name Sheila Cox (Figure 2.1).⁸⁶ News reading would be reserved for a select group of male announcers that would be dedicated to providing what the BBC deemed a vital aspect of the Corporation's part of the war effort, the accurate dissemination of news. Successful execution of news reports was central to maintaining the BBC's integrity and authority with the public, the government, and with other nations.⁸⁷ Gendering news-reading also demonstrated continuity with the use of all-male announcers and the anonymous BBC collective voice.

⁸² Memo, 7-Jun-40, Hytch to Chapman et. al., "Policy, Anonymity of Announcers."

⁸³ "Introducing All Your Announcers," *Radio Times*, 23 August 1940, 6-9.

⁸⁴ Karpf, *Archive on 4: Spoken Like a Woman*.

⁸⁵ "Refusal to Broadcast," *The Times*, 8 March 1934, 14; McKay, "Speaking Up," 22.

⁸⁶ Karpf, *Archive on 4: Spoken Like a Woman*.

⁸⁷ *The BBC Handbook 1942*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1942), 17, 55, 59; Alvar Lidell, "1941 with the BBC: News-Reader," *Radio Times*, 14 February 1941, 3.

FIGURE 2.1: SHEILA COX⁸⁸



The three new female announcers were Elizabeth Cowell, Kay Cavendish, and Hermione Hannen. The *Radio Times* article indicated that Cowell began announcing on radio in November 1939 for music and variety programmes, pianist and crooner Kay Cavendish in May 1940, and BBC repertory actress Hermione Hannen in the summer of 1940. Each woman's prior association to the BBC was clearly stressed.⁸⁹ Although trumpeted in the *Radio Times* in 1940, *The BBC Handbook 1941*, which covered the 1940 broadcasting year, made no mention of female announcers in its four-page article on announcers, only sandwiching a picture of Elizabeth Cowell in the Reference section between data on the "Time Signal Service" and "This Week's Good Cause".⁹⁰ By December 1942, the *Radio Times* published that fifteen female announcers were employed in the Home Service alone.⁹¹ This reckoning must have included Regional announcers as there were seven female announcers in the Home Service and another eight in the Regions. By this point the regional announcers were almost all women.⁹² In 1943, there were twenty-four women announcers, and twenty-six male announcers, which included an additional eight female and eight male announcers in the English-language Overseas Services (Table 2.1).⁹³ Women announcing eventually became such an accepted part of Regional broadcasting that when Elizabeth Miller requested a transfer to Scotland in 1946, it was suggested that she assume the role from a retiring male announcer.⁹⁴

⁸⁸ "Women Announcers of the BBC," *ibid.*, 18 December 1943, 7.

⁸⁹ "Introducing All Your Announcers," 7-8.

⁹⁰ *The BBC Handbook 1941*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1941), 85-88, 117 (picture).

⁹¹ "Women Announcers of the BBC," 7.

⁹² "BBC Staff List," (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1942), 20-21, 41-49.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 20-21, 30, 41-49.

⁹⁴ Memo, 8-Aug-46, Scottish Director to AC(Talks), "Left Staff, Miller, Gertrude Mary," (BBC WAC L1/2125/1, 1935). Miller's given name was Gertrude, but she went by Elizabeth.

Table 2.1: Female and Male Announcers at the BBC, 1943

Gender	Home Service	Regions	News Readers	English Overseas Services
Female	7	9	0	8
Male	11	3	4	8

The experiences of two of the initial choices for announcers, Elizabeth Cowell and Kay Cavendish, provided insight into the qualities a BBC announcer was supposed to possess regardless of their gender. Although both Cowell and Cavendish had public-facing roles prior to assuming announcing duties, the two women had very different backgrounds prior to joining the BBC and approached their work from different perspectives. Elizabeth Cowell had been hired as a Television Hostess, along with Jasmine Bligh, in 1936.⁹⁵ Cowell, Bligh, and their male colleague Leslie Mitchell introduced studio programmes and outside broadcasts until the service closed in September 1939. Although television was not seen by a huge audience in the 1930s, the position of Television Hostess was high profile, and the Hostesses participated in the public demonstrations that were held at Radiolympia in London before the war. For her part, Cowell could see the limitations of the job, and was already applying for production positions.⁹⁶ Cowell was from a privileged background and had previously worked in the Design and Display Department at Fortnum and Mason. Although she did not attend university, she was privately educated, had some knowledge of French and German, and was a practiced musician.⁹⁷ This fitted in well with the BBC requirements for announcers as they were expected to have knowledge of modern European languages and understand musical notation.⁹⁸

⁹⁵ Memo, 4-Jun-36, DSA to Head Office, RDs, EiCs, "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene," (BBC WAC L1/103/2, 1936).

⁹⁶ Memo, 10-Sep-37, TelPM to Bligh & Cowell (Radiolympia); 7-Apr-38, TelPM to DTel (Outside Broadcasts); 30 September 1938, Cowell to TelEx & GEO, *ibid*.

⁹⁷ Staff Record, 13-May-36, *ibid*.

⁹⁸ John Temple, "Secrets of B.B.C. Announcers," *Radio Pictorial*, 28 July 1939.

FIGURE 2.2: ELIZABETH COWELL⁹⁹



Initially declared redundant, Cowell searched to find an approved war service job before finally joining the Women's Auxiliary Air Force (WAAF). Almost as soon as she had enlisted, the BBC recalled her for service, and were able to negotiate at first a temporary loan from the Air Force which eventually became permanent.¹⁰⁰ Cowell was well-liked by her colleagues, and John Snagge, Head of the Presentation Department, was particularly complimentary.¹⁰¹ The *Radio Times*, as well as the Controller of Programmes, Basil Nicolls, admired her radio presentation skills, praising her well-modulated voice.¹⁰² Interestingly a *Picture Post* article on the BBC downplayed her role in announcing, and indicated that she had been hired to announce women's interest programmes (Figure 2.2).¹⁰³ Cowell resigned her position in 1942 over the Administration Division's refusal to grant her unpaid leave after her marriage. She returned some months later, first as holiday relief announcer and then on contract as a Producer in the European Services Division.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ Veronon Bartlett, "The B.B.C. At War," *Picture Post* 15 March 1941, 17.

¹⁰⁰ Memo, 27-Sep-39, ADPA to Streeton; 24-Oct-39, MPD to DPP; 2-Nov-39, MPD to AC(A); 16-Jan-40, Streeton to Snagge (Release), "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene."; Letter, 29-Sep-39, Streeton to Cowell; 13-Nov-39, Streeton to Air Ministry; 18-Nov-39, Air Ministry to Streeton; Memo, 22-Jul-40, Cowell to GEO, "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene," (BBC WAC L1/103/1, 1941-1972). The BBC had considered using her as an announcer from as early as September 1939, but she had joined the WAAF in the interim.

¹⁰¹ Annual Review, 1-May-41, "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene."

¹⁰² Guy Fletcher, "Miscellany," *Radio Times*, 1 November 1940, 7; Memo, 2 July 1941, C(A) to DG, "Policy, Presentation," (BBC WAC R34/581, 1938-1941).

¹⁰³ Bartlett, "The B.B.C. At War," 17.

¹⁰⁴ Memo, 18-Mar-42, Cowell to Snagge; 16-Nov-42, Empire Programme Department to OSEO; 22-Feb-43, EPM to Spencer, "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene."; Memo, 12-Jan-42, GEO to DPA; "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene."

FIGURE 2.3: THE CAVENDISH THREE¹⁰⁵



(l-r): Pat Rignold, Kay Cavendish and Joy Worth

Kay Cavendish (Figure 2.3) was a popular singer and pianist who appeared on BBC Variety programmes as part of the Cavendish Three. Another one of the trio's members, Joy Worth, also turned to announcing during the war.¹⁰⁶ Cavendish was very interested in becoming an announcer and had been pursuing an appointment for several months before being selected; it was clear that she also wanted to continue her singing career.¹⁰⁷ Her appointment met resistance, and she came into conflict almost immediately with the Music Department. The Assistant Director of Music objected to her casual manner and expression when announcing music programmes, a sentiment echoed by the Controller of Programmes Basil Nicolls.¹⁰⁸ Although initially supported by John Snagge, the Presentation Director, Snagge also became disenchanted with her as announcer.¹⁰⁹ This stemmed largely from Cavendish's preference for Variety work as an on-air performer. After a move to a BBC facility in Bangor, she spent most of her time working for Variety and, as a consequence, her announcing shifts were neglected. In the end, Cavendish stopped her announcing duties in June 1941 and transferred to a programme contract.¹¹⁰ In 1944, Cavendish joined an Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA) tour of Italy and spent the rest of the war entertaining the British forces in Europe.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁵ "The Cavendish Three," *Radio Pictorial*, 10 February 1939, 7.

¹⁰⁶ "Joy Worth," in *Desert Island Discs* (London: BBC, 1952).

¹⁰⁷ Letter, 12-Mar-40, Cavendish to Snagge; 27-Mar-40, Snagge to Cavendish; Memo, 29-May-40, PCEX to Variety Booking Mgr, "Left Staff, Cavendish, Kay," (BBC WAC L1/85, 1939).

¹⁰⁸ Memo, 1-Jul-40, Isaacs to MEx; 8-Aug-40, ADM to DPA; 14-Oct-40, C(P) to PD, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁹ Memo, 21-Aug-40, PD to Hibberd; 14-May-41, DPA to GEO; 18-Jun-41, PD to PEX; 26-Jun-41, DPA to VEX, *ibid*.

¹¹⁰ Memo, 2-Jul-40, PD to Streeton; Letter, 15-Jul-40, Barnes to Cavendish, *ibid*.

¹¹¹ Memo, 29-Feb-44, PCD to DV, *ibid*.; "Kay Cavendish," *The Times* (2000).

As noted, the main problem with Cavendish was her continued presence as a Variety performer, her unreliability as an announcer, and her casual presentation style. Cowell, in contrast, kept a low-key image and did not seek publicity. Cavendish's singing partner, Joy Worth, had a more successful career as an announcer on the Overseas Services, and was still announcing on the Overseas Services in the 1950s.¹¹² However, Cavendish had a much more public career. She remained in the limelight and continued to star in and host programmes on radio and television into the 1960s.¹¹³

While announcers were voices without a shape, programme hosts, or compères, were radio stars. Perhaps this is the role that Kay Cavendish envisioned for herself when she accepted the announcing position. Popular radio hosts like Freddie Grisewood were household names, but also attracted the ire of their announcing colleagues. When Grisewood was touted in early 1939 as "the popular BBC announcer" in an advertisement in *Radio Times* his colleagues bemoaned the publicity Grisewood received through his outside activities.¹¹⁴ The Director of Programme Planning, Charles Siepmann, registered the complaints from Grisewood's fellow announcers with managers, and the debate on the issue carried on for four months before being dropped just before the outbreak of war.¹¹⁵ John Snagge was attentive to similar issues of over-publicity for announcers throughout the war, but supported announcers identifying themselves on-air.

Women serving as programme hosts, or commères, was not unknown before the war. Doris Arnold hosted and produced two popular musical programme series in the interwar years, *The Melody is There* (1937) and *These You Have Loved* (1938-1963).¹¹⁶ Under the guidance of Cecil Madden in the Overseas Services Variety Department, the war years would endow female hosts with a new level of morale-boosting charm. Madden's promotion of particular women as "radio girlfriends" or "pin-up personalities" was designed to appeal to the soldiers stationed away from the British Isles – to give them an ersatz girlfriend to connect them to home. Christina Baade, in *Victory through Harmony: The BBC and Popular Music in World War II*, placed Madden's radio girlfriends within the wider phenomena of the pin-up girls.¹¹⁷ The BBC had even hired an actress in 1940 to act as Annette, a fictitious "Girlfriend of the Forces". According to the *Radio Times*: "Annette was just a voice on the phone, and it was left to the boys to imagine her as they felt inclined, short or tall, fair or dark, . . . someone who would provide a link with home and tell them in a pleasantly wistful way, without being ultra-sentimental, about all the little things they

¹¹² "Joy Worth."

¹¹³ "Kay Cavendish."

¹¹⁴ Memo, 6-Feb-39, DPP to DSA, "Policy, Anonymity of Announcers."

¹¹⁵ Memo, 13-Jun-39, DSA to C(A), *ibid*.

¹¹⁶ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 127-128.

¹¹⁷ Baade, *Victory through Harmony*, 13, 155-156.

miss so much.”¹¹⁸ Madden would move beyond made-up personalities like Annette to provide the British soldier with an array of real-life versions.

Madden had been the Programme Organiser for the Television Department before the war and took up the role of Organiser of the Overseas Entertainment Unit. Many of Madden's radio girlfriends had their own message programmes, which specialised in broadcasting greetings to and from soldiers. Hosts such as Anne Shelton, *Calling the British Forces in Malta*, Doreen Villers, *A Date for the Desert*, Beryl Davis, *Appointment with Beryl*, and Vera Lynn, *Sincerely Yours*, were on programme contracts, and were therefore not officially on the BBC staff. However, Madden's staff also included women who functioned both as programme host and producers. Long-time BBC staff member Joan Gilbert (Figure 2.4) fronted popular message shows to soldiers in Gibraltar.¹¹⁹ Wartime newcomer Una Marson (Figure 2.5) produced a similar message programme *Calling the West Indies* and later produced a literary programme *Caribbean Voices*.¹²⁰

FIGURE 2.4: JOAN GILBERT¹²¹



Gilbert had been with the Corporation since 1933, first entering the service as a temporary worker, and then being made a permanent secretary to A.W. Hanson, who was Producer for *In Town To-Night*. She quickly began taking on production tasks, even producing the show when Hanson, who was chronically ill, was incapacitated.¹²² After Hanson's untimely death, she moved into Television Variety and was quickly working as an assistant, as well as a scout, to the then Television Programme Organiser Cecil Madden. Seen as an ambitious and sometimes difficult colleague, Gilbert had a vivacious personality to counter her uneven temperament.¹²³ Due to her classification as Category C, she began

¹¹⁸ "Have You Met Annette?," *Radio Times*, 13 September 1940, 3.

¹¹⁹ Baade, *Victory through Harmony*, 153-158.

¹²⁰ Delia Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson, 1905-65* (Manchester and New York: Manchester University Press, 2010), 144-155.

¹²¹ "Left Staff, Gilbert, Joan Fitz-Henry," (BBC WAC L1/166/4, 1933-1951).

¹²² Annual Review, 1935-1937; Memo, 12-Jul-39, DDG to AC(O), *ibid*.

¹²³ Annual Review 1938; Interview, 31-March-39, Vickery and Gilbert, *ibid*.

work at the MOI on 1 September 1939, in a secretarial capacity and was quickly bored with the routine. She used her personal connections to lobby C.H.G. Millis of the Board of Governors to try to get her into an on-air propaganda role posing as a French-speaking on-air girlfriend – a role that ultimately went to an Australian actress Betty Stockfield.¹²⁴ Although Gilbert was promoted as an Overseas Announcer in the *Radio Times*, she was not part of the Overseas Services Presentation Department. In addition to her message programme to Gibraltar, she hosted the entertainment programmes *They Chose This Music*, *The American Eagle Club*, and *Overseas League Party*.¹²⁵ While this provided Gilbert a certain amount of fame, she was also under more public scrutiny. After a well-received visit with British forces stationed in Gibraltar, Gilbert was reported for making unguarded comments regarding her trip on a train between Bristol and London.¹²⁶ When television restarted in 1946, Gilbert became the host of the magazine programme *Picture Page*, ultimately surrendering her permanent position for a programme contract.

FIGURE 2.5: UNA MARSON¹²⁷



The Jamaican-born Una Marson was a journalist and a published poet. Prior to the war she had been working with Jamsave, an Jamaican organisation based on Save the Children. She had extensive contacts both with the Caribbean community in London, and amongst the political and literary milieu in London.¹²⁸ Madden had first met Marson at Radiolympia, an annual showcase for broadcasting held in London, and later offered her freelance work in the summer of 1939.¹²⁹ She began working for the Overseas Services

¹²⁴ Letter, 6-Dec-39, Gilbert to DDG; 8-Dec-39, Millis to Nicolls; 14-Dec-39, Millis to Pym, Elisabeth Barker, interview by Leonard Miall, 9 May, 1983, interview R143/6; "Left Staff, Gilbert, Joan Fitz-Henry."

¹²⁵ Cecil Madden, "1941 with the BBC - No. 13: Calling Forces Overseas," *Radio Times*, 2 May 1941, 3; "You Hear Thier Voices Regularly on the G.F.P.," *ibid.*, 10 March 1944; H.H. Stewart, "Microphone Mailbag," *ibid.*, 14 November 1941. The exact nature of the comments was not indicated in the internal memos.

¹²⁶ Interview, 31-Mar-43, Pym and Gilbert; Memo, 6-Apr-43, DSA to DEP, "Left Staff, Gilbert, Joan Fitz-Henry."

¹²⁷ *The BBC Year Book 1945*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1945), unpaginated.

¹²⁸ Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson*, 80-85, 142-143, 145-147.

¹²⁹ *Ibid.*, 144-145, 147, 149-150.

Division with a Christmas broadcast to the West Indies in 1940 which would be the start of *Calling the West Indies*, and she would go on to produce an interview programme, *Up Close*. In 1943 she developed and produced a literary programme, *Caribbean Voices*, that she modelled on a similar programme produced in the India Service.¹³⁰ Additionally, Marson starred, along with the popular West Indian cricketer Learie Constantine, in one of Paul Rotha's documentary films, *West Indies Calling*, that introduced the West Indians serving in the British Forces to the British home front.¹³¹

Marson was also promoted in the BBC publications the *Radio Times* and *London Calling*, and was featured in several articles in *Picture Post*.¹³² She was one of the few Overseas stars specifically named by the publicity department to be promoted in the press.¹³³ The security services saw the British Caribbean colonies, and Jamaica in particular, as a weak point in terms of espionage, due to the continuing tourist trade, and shared these concerns with the BBC. Perhaps for this reason the government was anxious to promote solidarity with the Islanders.¹³⁴ As a woman of colour, Marson also may have been promoted in the press as part of a propaganda effort to encourage Imperial unity.¹³⁵ With the end of the war, Marson returned to Jamaica at first just for a break, but permanently left the BBC service, although her programme *Caribbean Voices* continued to be broadcast for many decades.¹³⁶

Both Gilbert and Marson possessed qualities that made them good broadcasters, but volatile colleagues, and by all reports the two women clashed. Gilbert demonstrated a prejudicial attitude towards Marson and was affronted by what she perceived as Marson's lack of deference to her.¹³⁷ Gilbert was not the only BBC staff member to harbour prejudicial sentiments towards their colleagues from overseas. Following the publication

¹³⁰ Ibid., 153-154, 157-159.

¹³¹ John Page, "West Indies Calling" (Paul Rotha Productions Ltd, 1943); Wendy Webster, "The Whim of Foreigners': Language, Speech, and Sound in Second World War British Film and Radio," *Twentieth Century British History* 23, no. 3 (2012): 365.

¹³² Madden, "1941 with the BBC - No. 13," 3; *The BBC Handbook 1942*, 71; Laurence Gilliam, "The Job of the Radio Feature Man Today," *London Calling*, 1 September 1940, 3; "Photo: Leary (Sic) Constantine," *ibid.*, 16 August 1941, 19; "Photo: Una Marson," *London Calling*, 7 November 1943, 18; "At the B.B.C. Canteen," *Picture Post* 27 November 1943.

¹³³ Memo, 4 July 1941, DDES to Lines, "Publicity, Staff, File 1," (BBC WAC R44/555/1, 1940-1946). The full list included the following: The whole Afrikaans staff, Mr Etienne Amyot, Mr Macted, Mr R McCall, Mr Tritton, Miss Una Marson, Mr W.M. Macmillan, Mr Z.A. Bokhari and the Indian staff at Wood Norton.

¹³⁴ Meeting, 7-Feb-41, Jardine Brown and redacted, "Formalities, General Correspondence (Excluding External Services)," (BBC WAC R154/11/1, 1937-1942).

¹³⁵ Rose, *Which People's War?*, 242-261; Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity*, Chapter Two; Siân Nicholas, "Brushing up Your Empire': Dominion and Colonial Propaganda on the BBC's Home Services, 1939-45," *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 32, no. 2 (2003): 207-270.

¹³⁶ Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson*, 175; Leonie Thomas, "Making Waves: Una Marson's Poetic Voice at the BBC," *Media History* 24, no. 2 (2018): 221-222.

¹³⁷ David Hendy, "Caribbean Voices," BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/people-nation-empire/caribbean-voices>.

of a large photo of a Moroccan member of the Overseas Services Division in the weekly *The Illustrated*, a minor furore erupted over the publicity given to the staff member. While defending the BBC's safeguards that limited excessive personal publicity, the Director of Publicity stated that: "I can quite see that undue publicity for the simple-minded, picturesque figures in the Overseas Division (sic) is harmful, and we shall do our best to see that it is kept in proper proportion."¹³⁸ Marson's superiors did support her in the face of internal and external criticism, and recognised that much of the hostility was motivated by prejudice.¹³⁹ Gilbert's antipathy toward Marson may also have been born out of jealousy for Marson's high profile and the publicity afforded by her participation in Rotha's documentary film. Marson too could be defensive and difficult with colleagues she saw as a threat.¹⁴⁰ In both cases, the stress of their wartime work wreaked havoc on their personal lives as both women suffered breakdowns in the later stages of the war.¹⁴¹

Although the position of BBC announcer had originally been open to men only, the war did offer more opportunities for women. The creation of a separate category of news-reader allowed the BBC to retain part of its masculine voice. The establishment of the War Reporting Unit would also create another masculine signifier, the War Correspondent, that relied on the dissemination of news. The decision to use broadcasting as a propaganda tool to boost morale with the troops and to foster Imperial unity gave more opportunities for women to act as broadcasters. On the English-language Overseas Services these opportunities were often gendered as programme hosts' sex appeal was used to attract captive male listeners. Women did not always remain in these radio girlfriend roles, as Una Marson's varied programming demonstrated. Additionally although women did not read the news on the Home Service during the war, women read headline news on the General Forces Programme, and were well-received – an aspect of women's wartime announcing service that deserves further exploration.¹⁴² Staff members such as Cavendish, Marson and Gilbert who became personalities had to make a choice between the stability of working for the Corporation or the pressures of fame. Marson's health prevented her from returning to broadcasting and she permanently returned to Jamaica. Gilbert and Cavendish, like other BBC personalities such as wartime reporters Richard Dimbleby and Audrey Russell, the BBC's lone female War Correspondent, were ultimately forced to choose the security of a permanent staff position in order to remain on-air.¹⁴³

¹³⁸ Memos, 3-Jan-42, PD to C(H) (quote); 30-Dec-41, OPO to A/DOCD, AC(OS) & C(OS), "Publicity, Staff, File 1."

¹³⁹ Thomas, "Making Waves," 217-220.

¹⁴⁰ Jarrett-Macauley, *The Life of Una Marson*, 142-143, 150-151.

¹⁴¹ Thomas, "Making Waves," 221-222; Annual Review 1944, "Left Staff, Gilbert, Joan Fitz-Henry."

¹⁴² Memo, 13-Apr-45, Acting C(OS) to DG, "Policy, Anonymity of Announcers."

¹⁴³ Leonard Miall, *Inside the BBC: British Broadcasting Characters* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1994), 53-61; Audrey Russell, interview by Madeau Stewart, 1977, interview BBC WAC R143/110.

PRODUCERS: WOMEN MAKE THEIR MARK IN FEATURES AND DRAMA

Broadcasting production jobs were a completely new creative field that blossomed with the advent of radio. Radio production had some crossover with theatre production, but as a new genre, previous well-worn gender categories were not clear cut. Although there were few individuals at the BBC who carried the official title of Producer, there were many staff members labelled Assistants who were essentially producers. Women were more likely to be found in programme streams that concentrated on children's or women's issues. *Children's Hour* Organisers were almost all women.¹⁴⁴ The experimental social radio producer Olive Shapley started her career in the BBC's North Region as a *Children's Hour* Organiser in Manchester. When she moved into social documentary production, the initial expectation was that she would produce a straight forward women's magazine programme, but Shapley followed her own path.¹⁴⁵ School Broadcasting and Talks were also departments that would often have female as well as male Assistants. Talks and School Broadcasts were the first departments to have female heads – Hilda Matheson in 1927 and Mary Somerville in 1931, respectively.¹⁴⁶ Rhoda Power was a hard-working innovative Producer for Schools, and Janet Quigley was an early Talks Producer who would have a significant role in wartime programmes, particularly *Women at War*, *Mostly for Women*, and *The Kitchen Front*.¹⁴⁷

The Features and Drama Department (F&D) was less likely to have female staff, especially as producers. Barbara Burnham, who first joined on the BBC in 1929 as a play reader, would eventually turn her hand to producing. Six years after joining, Val Gielgud, the head of the Drama Department, declared that she was "one of the very best producers" in his department.¹⁴⁸ Play reading appeared to be a position open to women, as Barbara Burnham replaced a female staff member and was in turn replaced by Marianne Helweg. Helweg joined F&D as a Play Reader for Drama in 1933 and was paid a high salary of £4 per week for part-time work.¹⁴⁹ Another F&D Producer, Mary Hope Allen, worked her way

¹⁴⁴ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 128-130.

¹⁴⁵ Shapley, *Broadcasting*, 33-38, 50.

¹⁴⁶ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 153-188.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., 135-139 (on School Broadcasting); Quigley, Janet Quigley, "The Kitchen Front," *Radio Times*, 11 July 1941, 5; Leman, "Pulling Our Weight in the Call-up of Women," 109-118; Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 115-119.

¹⁴⁸ Letter, 13-Mar-29, AC to Burnham; Memo, 11-Mar-29, PD to Crutwell; 4-Feb-35, DD to PSE, "Left Staff, Burnham, Eveline Barbara ", (BBC WAC L1/589/2, 1929).

¹⁴⁹ Marianne Helweg, "Plays from All over Europe," *Radio Times*, 21 July 1939, 11; Memo, 28-Jan-33, Gielgud to DP; 7-Feb-33, Gielgud to ADP; 14-Feb-33, ADP to AC; 1-Mar-33, Programme Finance to London, "Left Staff, Burnham, Eveline Barbara ". These memos discussed hiring Helweg as Burnham's replacement as Play Reader. Helweg was chosen over a male candidate as it was thought he might want something more than the position offered. Helweg was seen as young and adaptable. Helweg was also a Danish national, but her employment was considered outside regulations prohibiting the hiring of non-nationals. Citizenship issues will be discussed further in Chapter Six.

up from secretary to Drama Producer.¹⁵⁰ However, although it was not exclusively male, F&D had a reputation as tough, hard-living masculine environment.¹⁵¹

Like most divisions during the war, F&D had difficulty retaining men from the services. The positions were neither technical nor administrative, and by 1942 their reservation level had crept up to thirty-five. Particularly after 1941, F&D turned to hiring women as Producers and Writers. Three of these women who joined exemplify how the war made it easier for women to advance in the Corporation without either working on gendered programming streams or working their way up through the clerical grades. The following section will highlight three of these women – Nesta Pain (Figure 2.6), Jenifer Wayne (Figure 2.7), and Marjorie Banks (Figure 2.8). All three women had very different backgrounds and interests but managed to find their own niche within F&D both during and after the war.

FIGURE 2.6: NESTA PAIN¹⁵²



Nesta Pain began work for the BBC in 1942. From Birkenhead, Pain was then in her mid-thirties, and had only recently begun working as a playwright. Although the BBC hired almost exclusively through application and boards, there were still many individuals who found their way into the Corporation through recommendations from staff, members of the Board of Governors, or other individuals connected to the Corporation. Pain's recommendation came through the Programme Director in the North Region, Andrew Stewart, who was the husband of one of Pain's school friends. She was from a noted local family and had graduated with a degree in Classics from the University of Liverpool, later studying for a post-graduate degree in Philology at Oxford. She joined F&D first as a researcher and writer, working primarily on Overseas Services Division productions in her

¹⁵⁰ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 132-135. Murphy discusses Burnham's career as well as Allen's.

¹⁵¹ Jeanette Thomas, "A History of the BBC Features Department, 1924-1964" (unpublished PhD thesis, Oxford University, 1993); Rayner Heppenstall, *Portrait of the Artist as a Professional Man* (London: Owen, 1969); Gilliam, "The Job of the Radio Feature Man Today."

¹⁵² "Left Staff, Pain, Florence Nesta Kathleen ", (BBC WAC L1/2121/2, 1942).

first year. Although initially dismissed by the Head of Features, Laurence Gilliam, as untrainable as a producer, she won him over and became a noted Producer of scientific programmes.¹⁵³

FIGURE 2.7: JENIFER WAYNE¹⁵⁴



Jenifer Wayne began work in the Features Unit in 1940. Like Pain, she had been introduced to the Corporation through an intermediary, her father. Philip Wayne was the well-known headmaster of Marylebone Grammar School and had contacted the Director of Staff Administration, William Pym, looking for jobs for both his wife and his daughter.¹⁵⁵ Jenifer Wayne had been teaching at the High School for Girls in Newark-on-Trent since graduating from Somerville College Oxford two years earlier, and seemed to be looking for more stimulating work.¹⁵⁶ After some initial concerns that Wayne, an Oxford University graduate, "... might be a bit recessive and scholarly for [the BBC]", Wayne was hired directly into a monthly-paid post.¹⁵⁷ After completing a six-month trial in Features, she was sent, over the objections of the West Region Head, to Bristol to replace Douglas Cleverdon as Features Assistant. Angry at having had their star producers Francis Dillon and Cleverdon transferred to London, the West Region admitted in the end that Wayne was a capable producer.¹⁵⁸ One of her first solo productions for the West Region, *Salisbury Plain*, was praised in the *BBC Handbook* for 1943, quite a coup for a junior producer.¹⁵⁹ Gilliam finagled Wayne's return to London for six-months' training in 1942, and then permanently

¹⁵³ Kate Terkanian and Hugh Chignell, "Nesta Pain: The Entangled Media Producer," *Media History* In Press (2019).

¹⁵⁴ "Left Staff, Wayne, Jenifer," (BBC WAC L1/446, 1941-1950).

¹⁵⁵ Memo, 29-May-41, HRO to DDSA; 30-May-41, DDSA to HRO, *ibid*.

¹⁵⁶ Letter, 15-Jul-41, from Engledow; CV, c. 1941, *ibid*.

¹⁵⁷ Letter, 21-Jul-41, Cameron to Derbyshire; 14-Aug-41, GEO to Wayne, *ibid*. This comment was somewhat odd as the BBC had previously hired female Oxford graduates for production jobs, and may have been prompted by Cameron who was a relative newcomer to the BBC

¹⁵⁸ Letter, 2-Apr-42, Gilliam to Hughes; Memo, 19-Apr-42, WRD to ADF; 1-May-42, WRD to AC(P); 30-Jun-42, WRD to ADF, *ibid*.

¹⁵⁹ *The BBC Handbook 1943*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1943), 33.

at her request in September 1944. Her transfer caused a rift between Gilliam and the West Region Director George Beadle, and involved the intervention of the Director General.¹⁶⁰ Upon her return to London, Wayne worked on the programme *This is the Law*, writing the introduction for a book on the programme in 1947. She left the Corporation in 1948.¹⁶¹

FIGURE 2.8: MARJORIE BANKS¹⁶²



Of the three wartime Producers featured here, Marjorie Banks entered BBC service through perseverance rather than connections. Like Pain and Wayne, Banks had attended university, receiving an honours degree from the University of London.¹⁶³ However, Banks was also an experienced radio writer and producer, having worked for the Commercial Radio Department at the London Press Exchange in the 1930s.¹⁶⁴ During the first years of the war, she had contacted several BBC staff members including Val Gielgud, Cecil Madden, and F&D Producer Francis Dillon, attempting to sell some of her scripts to the BBC.¹⁶⁵ Banks successfully pitched a military-themed documentary programme to Gielgud, but had concealed her gender throughout the transaction. Signing her letters M.A. Banks, she allowed Gielgud to believe she was a man.¹⁶⁶ Confessing her subterfuge in a letter to another BBC employee, she indicated that her motivation had been to prove that she was capable of writing in any genre and did not want Gielgud to think her only capable of writing

¹⁶⁰ Memo, 12-Jul-43, WRD to ADF; 19-Jul-42, C(P) to WRD, 9-Jun-44, WRD to WPRD; 20-Jul-44, ADP to C(P); 10-Aug-44, WRD to C(P); 28-Aug-44, WRD to AC(P), 1-Sep-44, DFD to C(P); 5-Sep-44, C(P) to DG; 8-Sep-44, DG to C(P), "Left Staff, Wayne, Jenifer."

¹⁶¹ Memo, 2-Sep-47, Wayne to DF; Letter, 29-Jul-48, Wayne to Gilliam, *ibid*.

¹⁶² "Viscountess Bangor," *The Times* (1991). Banks married BBC war correspondent Edward Ward in 1951 and assumed the title Viscountess Bangor. Ward became the 7th Viscount Bangor when his father died in 1950.

¹⁶³ *Ibid*.

¹⁶⁴ Letter, 16-Sep-41, Banks to BBC (probably Cecil Madden), "Contributor File: Scriptwriter, Banks, Marjorie," (BBC WAC 1939-1956).

¹⁶⁵ Letter, c. 1939, Banks to Dillon, 29-Sep-39, Banks to Harris; 20-May-41, Banks to Gielgud; 16-Sep-41, Banks to Madden, *ibid*.

¹⁶⁶ Letter, 13-Jun-41, Gielgud to Banks; 19-Jun-41, Banks to Gielgud; Memo, 21-Aug-41, Programme Contracts to DFD, *ibid*.

women's programming.¹⁶⁷ Eventually Banks joined the BBC staff as a writer, continuing to specialise in documentary-style news programmes such as *Girls Behind the Guns* and *Night Shift*. She was one of the producers of the F&D series, *War Report*, and worked on the programme *Transatlantic Call*. By 1950 she had left the BBC service but was still producing documentary programmes for the Corporation.¹⁶⁸

Pain, Wayne and Banks all joined the BBC during the war and became successful Producers in F&D. They were not the only women to enter the department during the war, but they do exemplify the opportunities that were available through the combination of labour shortages and the expansion of programming. All three produced programmes that aired on the Home Services and the Overseas Services, and all of their careers extended beyond the end of hostilities. Their careers were generally outside of the more feminised programming streams. After completing their initial training, both Pain and Wayne had been suggested for positions in School Broadcasting or *Children's Hour*, along with Home or News Talks (Wayne) and F&D (Pain).¹⁶⁹ Pain and Banks collaborated in the post-war era on a programme *Focus on the Housewife*, that was part of a larger public affairs series produced by Banks called *Focus*.¹⁷⁰ Of the three, Nesta Pain would serve the longest with the Corporation, fully retiring in 1971. Both Wayne and Banks married BBC War Correspondents and made changes to accommodate their growing families. It is significant that of the three Pain was a divorcee, and her daughter was already an adult. The fact that family obligations did not hinder her in fulfilling her job duties may have allowed her to continue in a demanding production position.

MANAGEMENT AND ADMINISTRATION

Moving into Management and Administration was a much more difficult proposition for women at the BBC. Many of the women who took on announcing or production jobs were relatively young and would not have had the experience required to assume more responsible roles. Gladys Burlton was an early example of a wartime appointment at a senior level. Although her tenure with the Corporation was short-lived, other women with similar backgrounds were brought into directly to fill administrative positions. Joanna Spicer (Figure 2.9) and Elizabeth Kilham Roberts (Figure 2.10) joined the BBC in 1941 and would both have long careers with the Corporation. Another route for advancement for

¹⁶⁷ Letter, 16-Sep-41, Banks to Madden, *ibid*. The letter did not include the addressee, but in the context of other files and letters the recipient was most likely Cecil Madden.

¹⁶⁸ Virginia Madsen, "Innovation, Women's Work and the Documentary Impulse: Pioneering Moments and Stalled Opportunities in Public Service Broadcasting in Australia and Britain," *Media International Australia* 162, no. 1 (2017): 25; "Viscountess Bangor."

¹⁶⁹ Memo, 30-Aug-41, DST to DDSA, "Left Staff, Wayne, Jenifer.", Home or Empire Talks, Schools or possibly Children's Hour (circled).

¹⁷⁰ Kristin Skoog, "The 'Responsible' Woman: BBC and Women's Radio 1945-1955" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of Westminster, 2010), 99-104.

ambitious female staff was to make the jump from weekly-paid positions into salaried roles, eventually leading to management positions. The career of Clare Lawson Dick (Figure 2.11) will be used to explore this issue later in this section to emphasise how wartime expansion allowed some women to rise rapidly through the ranks.

FIGURE 2.9: JOANNA SPICER¹⁷¹



When the Ministry of Information started operations after the outbreak of war, Joanna Spicer was among of the first group of employees.¹⁷² Financial obligations had drawn her into the workforce, and through connections, she found employment as a Temporary Junior Assistant Principal, working on the estimates for the cost of expansion of the Overseas Services Division of the BBC.¹⁷³ Lured away from the MOI by the BBC with the promise of better pay and a more stimulating work environment, Spicer joined the BBC in July 1941 as Empire Executive, moved to Administrative Assistant with the 1942 reorganisation, and then Overseas Programme Planning a year later.¹⁷⁴ Spicer had been one of the candidates for the WEO post that ultimately went to Gladys Burlton.¹⁷⁵ The former Principal of Somerville College Oxford, Margery Fry, praised Spicer, but also thought she was not sympathetic enough for the position of WEO. Prior to joining the MOI, Spicer had worked as an Establishment Officer for Selfridge's, dealing with both female and male staff, a distinction that was remarked upon by the BBC.¹⁷⁶ Spicer would later gloss over

¹⁷¹ "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 2," (BBC WAC L1/210/2, 1941-1972).

¹⁷² "Ministry of Information. Organisation", Hansard, HC Deb, 09-Oct-39, vol 352, cc16-22. <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1939/oct/09/organisation>, accessed 20-Sep-2018.

¹⁷³ "Joanna Spicer CBE: Interview Part 1," BBC, <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/bbc-memories/joanna-spicer>; Interview, 6-Jun-40, Freeston and Spicer, "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1."

¹⁷⁴ "Joanna Spicer CBE: Interview Part 1"; Memo, 1-Jul-42, GEO to Standard Distribution, "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1."; BBC Staff Application Form, 20-Dec-41 "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 2."

¹⁷⁵ Note, c. Jun-40, Cameron, "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1."

¹⁷⁶ Interview, 6-Jun-40, Freeston; 23-Jun-41, Cameron, *ibid*.

her years at Selfridge's in a 1984 interview, implying that she had started at the MOI very soon after leaving Oxford, although she had in fact graduated in 1927.¹⁷⁷

The BBC had been eager to hire Spicer away from the MOI. Spicer indicated both at the time, and in later interviews, that the primary motivators for leaving the Civil Service was the pay imbalance – the Civil Service paid women twenty-percent less – and the lack of opportunity for advancement.¹⁷⁸ The BBC did generally pay female and male staff equally, but advancement, especially in the upper grades, was not necessarily smoother. During her first few years at the BBC, two incidents demonstrated that the structure of the organisation often worked against women reaching the top jobs. Shortly after she was hired, Spicer discovered that she was expected to work occasional weekend shifts. The onerousness of the extra shift was exacerbated because Spicer had been evacuated to Maidenhead with her son. Other staff who lived in London were merely required to be available by phone, while she was required to come in to the office. Her direct superior, Leonard Schuster, was aghast that any executive would balk at performing extra duties due to a conflict with family obligations and wrote an unflattering annual review on the basis of the incident.¹⁷⁹

The second occurred in the immediate post-war period. Anxious not to be permanently relegated to Overseas Programme Planning, Spicer applied and was selected in 1946 for third-in-command at the newly established Light Programme. The move went awry when the Controller of the Overseas Services Division, J.B. Clark, officially opposed the move and the post was given to an outside candidate on a six-month temporary contract. The delay in transfer effectively derailed her appointment as the head of the Light Programme was reluctant to dislodge the interim appointment who was performing well.¹⁸⁰ Clark's protest against her transfer was couched in terms of his alarm at the loss of staff at the end of the war as many of the administrators in the Overseas Services Division transferred into new peacetime appointments. However, Clark had also put forward two additional male candidates from his Division, which brings into question his motives for sabotaging Spicer's transfer.¹⁸¹ When the offer was formally withdrawn from Spicer in 1947, a query to department heads for an equivalent post was made. The one post available in the Television Service, Administrative Officer (Entertainment), was deemed

¹⁷⁷ "Joanna Spicer CBE: Interview Part 1"; Letter Extract, 19-May-41, likely Helen Darbishire, "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1."

¹⁷⁸ "Joanna Spicer CBE: Interview Part 1"; Interview, 6-Jun-40, Freeston and Spicer, "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1."

¹⁷⁹ Memo, 8-Sep-41, DOPA to Spicer; 12-Sep-41, GEO to DOPA; 3-Nov-41, DOPA to C(A), "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 1."

¹⁸⁰ Memo, 1-Apr-46, C(OS) to HSA; 2-Apr-46, Collins to HSA; 13-Feb-48, Chalmers to CSA; 17-Feb-48, DOS to CSA, *ibid.* See also other memos in the same file that detail the events.

¹⁸¹ Memo, 31-Mar-46, AppO to HSA, *ibid.*

suitable only for a man.¹⁸² The result of Clark's actions kept her in the Overseas Services Division until 1950 when she became a special assistant to George Barnes in the Television Service.¹⁸³ When she retired from the BBC in 1973, she held the post of Assistant Controller, Television Development.

FIGURE 2.10: ELIZABETH KILHAM ROBERTS¹⁸⁴



Another woman who joined the BBC wartime staff directly into a responsible administrative post was Elizabeth Kilham Roberts (Figure 2.10). Kilham Roberts had an impressive background. She had a degree in Chemistry from the University of Glasgow and was an experienced science teacher. She also had equally impressive connections. Her uncle James Bone was London editor of the *Manchester Guardian* and another uncle was artist Sir Muirhead Bone. After leaving her teaching position in 1932, Kilham Roberts and her husband Denys ran the Society of Authors from their home in Reading.¹⁸⁵ The Deputy Director of Staff Administration, A.C. Cameron, was so impressed upon meeting her at a Civil Service employment board that he rushed back to Broadcasting House and urged her immediate hiring. He stated “. . . that she was just the type of woman we want for jobs in our own department, either for W.S.A. or otherwise and I shall be grateful if you will get in touch with her, blitz her through College, and engage her forthwith. . .”¹⁸⁶ Kilham Roberts proved equally impressive on the job and quickly rose within the ranks of the Administration Division. The 1942 reorganisation caused a slight derailment in her progress when her position of Women's Staff Officer in Oxfordshire was eliminated.¹⁸⁷ As one of the several Women Staff Officers displaced by the reorganisation, Kilham Roberts was moved to

¹⁸² Note, 10-Jan-47, Pym, *ibid*.

¹⁸³ "Joanna Spicer CBE: Interview Part 1".

¹⁸⁴ "Left Staff, Roberts, Elizabeth Kilham."

¹⁸⁵ Letter, 8-Oct-46, Kilham-Roberts to AppO, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁶ Memo, 1-Oct-41, DDSA to RO, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁷ Memo, 2-May-42, GEO to WEO, *ibid*.

Programme Administration Division, and she became the Assistant Establishment Officer for Programmes, a post she held for many years after the end of the war.¹⁸⁸

The transfer of Women Staff Officers to various divisions highlighted the unequal status that women administrators held in the Corporation. Most of the WSOs who were transferred to other Divisions were designated Assistants to the Establishment Officer, rather than Assistant Establishment Officers. This was a distinction that diminished their roles in their respective divisions. The Assistant Controller of Programmes, Richard J.F. Howgill, demanded that Kilham Roberts's title be altered to Assistant Establishment Officer, adding that "[t]his is exactly what she is, and I can see no justifiable reason for adhering to her present description which implies insufficient status in relation to the responsibilities."¹⁸⁹ Howgill's intervention altered both Kilham Roberts' title and grade.¹⁹⁰

Despite numerous attempts to advance her career, Kilham Roberts remained Assistant Establishment Officer until 1955. Her immediate superiors continued to be supportive and on one occasion complained that she had not been shortlisted for a higher post, laying the blame on the Corporation's unwillingness to promote female administrators.¹⁹¹ This contention was borne out when Kilham Roberts was passed over for a promotion to Administrative Officer in the Talks Department. The appointment board stated that:

Mrs. Kilham Roberts was an impressive candidate, but after careful discussion it was decided that her selection was undesirable simply because the administrative staff of the Talks Division already consisted largely of women, viz the Controller, the Establishment Assistant, and the Administrative Assistants of the School Broadcasting and Religious Broadcasting Departments. It was thought desirable that the occupant of the Administrative Officer post should be a man. Mrs. Kilham Roberts was not, therefore, directly compared from the point of view of merit with the other two candidates.¹⁹²

Kilham Roberts was eventually appointed a year later when the post reopened, but again was almost passed up for a younger, male candidate.¹⁹³

¹⁸⁸ Memo, 11-Jul-42, GEO to Standard Distribution, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁹ Memo, 20-Aug-42, AC(P) to Secretary, Establishment Control, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁰ Memo, 18-Feb-43, AO(P) to C(P), *ibid*.

¹⁹¹ Memo, 6-Dec-51, AO(Ent) to AppO, *ibid*.

¹⁹² Memo, 6-Dec-51, AO(Ent) to AppO, *ibid*.

¹⁹³ Minutes, 11-Aug-55, *ibid*.

FIGURE 2.11: CLARE LAWSON DICK¹⁹⁴



Clare Lawson Dick had been eager to join the BBC when she first applied in 1934, but had received discouraging responses from Gweneth Freeman about her career prospects within the organisation. Lawson Dick was seemingly well-qualified. She had attended L'Universite de Grenoble, had a diploma in Journalism from King's College London, and had had studied Elements of Economics at the London School of Economics. She had even worked as a Publicity Agent for MP Eleanor Rathbone. However, without any shorthand or typing qualifications, Lawson Dick was only offered a temporary holiday position as a Clerk in the Registry Department.¹⁹⁵ By October 1935 she had a full-time position in the Registry Department and she was in charge of sorting and filing letters for the *Radio Times*.¹⁹⁶ However, Lawson Dick had bigger plans and sought every opportunity she could to advance her career. A 1937 application for a Talks Assistant was rejected for the principal reason that a man was desired for the post.¹⁹⁷ Her desire to get ahead was not fully supported by Freeman and the Director of Office Administration, Ralph Wade.¹⁹⁸ In September 1939, she was given the opportunity to become an Archival Clerk for the Secretariat, a move that Wade actively hindered.¹⁹⁹ Wade's interference may have been

¹⁹⁴ Clare Lawson Dick, "1941 with the BBC - No. 9: Wartime Secretary," *Radio Times*, 4 April 1941.

¹⁹⁵ Application, c. 1935; Letter, 26-Mar-35, WSA to Lawson Dick, Interview Form, 29-Mar-35, "Left Staff, Dick, Clare Lawson."

¹⁹⁶ Letter, 9-Oct-35, Freeman to Lawson Dick, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁷ Memo, 13-Aug-37, GEO to Lawson Dick, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁸ Memo, 22-Jul-36, Hort to WSA (internal application); Memo, c. Mar-37, DOA to Mills; 5-Mar-37, DOA to Editor, *Radio Times*; 8-Mar-37, Editor, *Radio Times* to DOA, *ibid*. All staff had to seek endorsements when applying for positions outside of their departments. Lawson Dick had applied for a position as Play Reader without approval and had been castigated for this by Freeman. On another occasion, Lawson Dick had written a short piece for the *Radio Times* about the Registry Department. Wade was enraged that she had showed the article to her contact at the *Radio Times* before showing it to her supervisor in Registry.

¹⁹⁹ Memo, 23-Sep-39, DHI to PREx; c. Nov-39, Mills to WSA; *ibid*.

related to his antipathy to Stephen Tallents, the then-Controller of the Public Relations Division, who had selected Lawson Dick for the role.²⁰⁰ Freeman also disapproved of the appointment and expressed the opinion that other people were more qualified and deserving of the role than Lawson Dick.²⁰¹ The move eventually took place through an initial transfer to the Programme Correspondence Unit as a Junior Assistant, and from there into the Archivist role in the Secretariat.²⁰² From her role as Archivist with the Secretariat, Lawson Dick was promoted to Programme Planning Assistant in 1943, and became Second Assistant to Head of the Home Service in 1945.²⁰³

Lawson Dick would have a very long career with the BBC, ultimately becoming Controller of Radio 4 in 1975. This was a great achievement for a woman, but it was also an appointment made very late in her career. When she assumed the role of Second Assistant, Home Service, it was noted that the Director-General (DG) had agreed that the post should go to a woman.²⁰⁴ This stipulation was presumably due to the fact that the Second Assistant would handle the daytime programming. However, even this posting was not secure as there were discussions in 1946 that the resettlement of service personnel might force Lawson Dick from her role. Lawson Dick's superior at the time, Lindsay Wellington, was very supportive of her position and resisted any displacement.²⁰⁵ She was eventually promoted to First Assistant, Home Service in 1957.²⁰⁶ The decision not to interview her when the Controller position opened up in 1969 was particularly bitter for her.²⁰⁷ In what was thought to be her last annual review, Tony Whitby, who had been appointed Controller of Radio 4 in 1969, wrote, "I have no doubt that had Clare been of the opposite sex she would have ended her BBC career at the very least as permanent occupant of my chair and probably in higher places yet".²⁰⁸ In a twist of fate, Lawson Dick would become Controller three months later when Tony Whitby died.

²⁰⁰ Wade, "Early Life in the B.B.C.," Chapter 13: Post-War Vicissitudes.

²⁰¹ Interview, 13-Oct-39, WSA and GEO, "Left Staff, Dick, Clare Lawson."

²⁰² Memo, 20-Apr-40, GEO to WSA; 18-Apr-41, A/OCEX to Haverfield, *ibid*.

²⁰³ Memo, 22-May-42, Spencer to SWSO(L); 11-Jun-42, DPP to Combe; 27-Jun-45, Wellington to HSA, *ibid*.

²⁰⁴ Memo, 27-Jun-45, Wellington to HSA, *ibid*.

²⁰⁵ Memo, 16-Sep-46, Wellington to Resettlement Officer, *ibid*.

²⁰⁶ Minutes, 23-Jul-57, *ibid*.

²⁰⁷ Interview, 5-Nov-69, MD, Radio and Lawson Dick, *ibid*.

²⁰⁸ Annual Review 1975, *ibid*.

CONCLUSIONS

In the interwar years, the BBC as a new technology and a modern workplace offered women career opportunities that were not available in other industries or professions.²⁰⁹ This was particularly true for women wanting stable, yet stimulating, careers in public service. Advancement in other public service organisations such as teaching, the postal service, or more broadly in government departments, often depended on women remaining single, and paid women a lower wage than their male colleagues. The Civil Service, which included the largest public-sector employer of women, the General Post Office, and many local councils, which employed women both as teachers and health workers, required married women to resign any permanent positions on marriage.²¹⁰ In contrast, the BBC did not impose any form of a marriage bar until 1933, and even then the bar was not absolute.²¹¹ The BBC also offered equal pay for most job categories. However, women's advancement in the Corporation was hampered by gendered imbalances in the structure of the organisation, which maintained gendered categories for clerical staff. Ambitious women who entered the Corporation through the clerical grades could linger in weekly-paid roles with only limited opportunities to advance into gender-neutral roles.

The Second World War would challenge many of the structures that segregated the career paths of women and men within the Corporation. Within the clerical ranks, the eventual abolition of the separate Women's Establishment and the marriage bar gave women more options to control their careers. Although clerical roles remained largely a women's realm, there was no longer the extra hurdle to get beyond the Women's Establishment that some women found restricting. Some jobs were still considered to be strictly for men, but women were now recruited and interviewed through the same channels as men. Many women still left BBC employment after marriage, but the lifting of the marriage bar meant that this decision became personal. Administrators no longer sat in judgement on the individual female worker's capacity to be both a wife and an efficient member of staff. Women with the right qualifications were also able to move into hitherto restricted roles such as announcing, production, or even administration. While the truly exceptional may have risen to the top, albeit with some amount of difficulty, women did earn the respect of their wartime male colleagues.

²⁰⁹ Murphy, "A Marriage Bar of Convenience?," 534-537; Murphy, "From Women's Hour," 32-33; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 5.

²¹⁰ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, Chapter Six.

²¹¹ Murphy, "A Marriage Bar of Convenience?," 542-555.

Chapter Three SOLVING A CRISIS OF STAFF – RECRUITMENT IN THE ADMINISTRATION DIVISION

I very much hope that it will be decided to reduce programme output and so allow of a reduction of the programme staffs and a simplification of the administrative machinery. Such action would reduce or eliminate the necessity to replace staff hitherto reserved as they are called up. Such reduction of programme hours should, I think, precede the crisis which I am sure will come in the matter of recruitment. D.H. Clarke, General Establishment Officer¹

Two days before the Second World War officially began on 3 September 1939, the BBC began shuttling staff and equipment out of London. For security reasons, the public was only informed that the broadcasts were originating from 'somewhere' in England.² The transmission system was transferred to a diffuse grid designed to prevent the enemy from using broadcasting signals as targets, and the regional stations and the Television Service were shuttered, leaving only the newly-designated Home Service as the single national channel. The BBC had been planning the logistics of a possible war from 1935 and had executed its London evacuation calmly and efficiently.³ Yet despite considering a wide variety of logistical problems, the organisation seemed ill-prepared when staffing shortages began to hamper output at the close of 1940. The staffing crisis appeared to have been precipitated by the BBC's ambitious expansion of services, particularly broadcasts to Europe, but also by a lack of adequate infrastructure to handle a dramatic loss of staff in the face of a shrinking pool of available candidates.

Prior to the outbreak of war, the BBC was already a large organisation, and hiring decisions were made by department heads and staff supervisors. However, the mechanics of staff recruitment were handled by the Department of Staff Administration. The Director of Staff Administration directly before the war began, and throughout the conflict, was William St. John Pym. As discussed in Chapter Two, two Establishment Officers worked directly under Pym, Douglas H. Clarke dealing with the Administration and Programme Divisions, and Peter A. Florence handling the Engineering Division. Additionally, Gweneth M. Freeman served as the Women Staff Administrator, and reported to Clarke.⁴ Although Florence was technically part of the Staff Administration, the Engineering Department was semi-autonomous, and Florence seemed to follow his own recruitment agenda. For this reason, Engineering recruitment will be discussed in the next chapter. This chapter will

¹ Memo, 17-Jun-40, GEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

² Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 90.

³ Ibid., 75-92.

⁴ "BBC Staff List," 40-41.

explore the problems encountered recruiting female staff, particularly in the Administration Division. The discussion below will examine hiring policy in the late 1930s, particularly with regard to married women, as BBC practice during the 1930s had consequences on wartime staffing levels. An examination of BBC strategy after the outbreak of war, and during the rapid Overseas Services Division expansion will follow. The introduction of the Women's Labour Draft and a 1942 BBC reorganisation would again shift hiring policies, particularly where female staff were concerned. These changes, as well as the introduction of training programmes to cope with recruitment challenges, will also be explored.

THE LOOMING CRISIS

The economic crisis and resulting mass unemployment of the 1930s had created a situation in which the BBC had not experienced a shortage of applications for positions within the organisation, particularly for weekly-paid staff. Weekly-paid staff included staff on lower grades which ranged from lift operators to clerical staff to Junior Maintenance Engineers. Internal documents indicated that in 1936, there was a four-year waiting list for male House Staff, and a nearly two-year waiting list for female House Staff.⁵ In the upper grades, or monthly-paid staff, Douglas Clarke had lengthy discussions with the Civil Service over the possibility of recruiting from the annual Civil Service exam. After two years, the Corporation was still undecided about the possibility as they envisioned only hiring one or two employees per year, and this was not guaranteed.⁶ In terms of clerical and secretarial staff, there seemed an equal oversupply. In a 16 March 1934 memo, Women Staff Administrator Gweneth Freeman stated "it would not be practicable to advertise secretarial vacancies except where unusual qualifications were required in addition to shorthand and typewriting."⁷ However by November 1936, the situation had altered and Freeman supported soliciting a limited number of speculative applications on a twice-yearly basis.⁸ The first advertisement welcoming these submissions appeared in *The Times* on 3 December 1936.⁹ Localised advertisement in London and in such a respectable paper such as *The Times* indicated that only applications from well-educated, experienced individuals would be seriously considered.

⁵ House staff under discussion included male and female catering staff, concessionaires (security staff), and liftmen. Memo, 26-Nov-36, Catering Manager to GEO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁶ Memo, 8-Jan-37, GEO to DSA; 20-Oct-37, C(A) to DSA; 1-Nov-38, DSA to C(A); Interview, 3-Jan-39, Mennell (Civil Service) and DSA, *ibid*. Although the discussions only used male pronouns, women also took this exam and might have been considered. The continued reference to male candidates indicated that the BBC thought these roles more appropriate for men.

⁷ Memo, 16-Mar-34, WSA to illegible, *ibid*.

⁸ Memo, 10-Nov-36, DSA to Regional Executives, *ibid*.

⁹ "Public Announcements," *The Times*, 3 December 1936, 3.

Despite the seeming oversupply of potential employees, there were warning signs of a tightening of the labour market prior to the outbreak of hostilities, particularly with regard to catering and clerical staff. Some of these problems were briefly mentioned in Chapter Two, but a closer look is now warranted. Prior to 1939, there were three particular areas where the BBC struggled to fill open positions – wardrobe and make-up in the Television Service, temporary catering staff, and temporary clerical staff. As will be outlined, the first example, wardrobe and make-up assistants, was arguably more critical for the BBC as they involved the hiring of permanent staff. The hiring of temporary catering and clerical staff was problematic particularly during crisis periods such as the summer and Christmas vacation periods, or to cover sudden and long-term illnesses. The BBC's responses to these staff shortages varied and demonstrated to what extent the Administration was willing to reformulate policy, particularly when it clashed with practical concerns. The role the marriage bar played in all three examples is also illustrative.

In the early period of the development of television, the BBC hired make-up experts that had worked for the film industry or on the stage. Internal records indicate this was initially not an occupation gendered for female staff.¹⁰ However by 1937, BBC officials began to consider the position appropriate for women, and exclusively began referring to potential make-up staff with a feminine pronoun. By 1938, the Television Executive, Leonard Schuster, had determined that requirements for broadcasting were unique and that the BBC would have to develop its own standards, even suggesting that a special training school should be established.¹¹ The woman who would later become head of make-up and wardrobe for the Television Service, Miss Mary Allan, was hired in August 1936 and made permanent in February 1937. The only issue with employing Allan had been that she was a married woman, Mrs. Dino Calvani. During her marriage tribunal, the panel concluded: "[h]er job is highly specialised. On both sides (make-up and wardrobe), she is reported to be first-class. She is economical and very good in dealing with artists. It is probably a post in which it is an advantage to have a married woman."¹² The tribunal panel unanimously approved her retention, and it was clear that Allan was highly valued. However, the issue of married women working in make-up and wardrobe would re-emerge within the year.

In January 1938, BBC Television had hired three seamstresses to handle the costuming needs for television productions. Of the three, one was single, one was a widow,

¹⁰ Memo, 9-Jul-35, DTA to EO, "Departmental, Television, Women Staff, File 1a," (BBC WAC R13/426/1, 1932).

¹¹ Memo, 14-Sep-38, GEO to TelEx, "Departmental, Television, Women Staff, File 1b."

¹² Tribunal Minutes, 27-Feb-37, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, Tribunals." There was no explanation as to why married women would be preferable in this post. The reference seemed only to support altering policy to fit the BBC's employment shortages in the area or to benefit a valued staff member.

and the third, Mrs. F. Goodship, was unambiguously married.¹³ The argument that Goodship was providing a special expertise for the Corporation could not be made. Instead the position of seamstress was determined to be one that was traditionally occupied by married women, along with other specific categories such as female lavatory and cloakroom attendants, as well as charwomen.¹⁴ A few months later Douglas Clarke forwarded another request from Television for an exemption to the marriage bar in relation to hiring a make-up assistant, Miss Bliss, who was felt to be the only suitable candidate. Although technically married, Bliss had been separated and self-supporting for a considerable amount of time. Bliss's situation was similar to another employee, Jeanne 'Johnny' Bradnock, who had been hired in 1937 despite her marital status.¹⁵

In both these cases, the BBC made decisions that were couched in conforming to traditional practice, in the case of Goodship, or compassionate circumstances, for Bliss. However, the records reveal that these decisions served the interest of the Corporation, and were made for reasons of practicality rather than strict adherence to policy.¹⁶ A written response in the margins suggested that although there were categories of employment the BBC viewed as appropriate for married women, Pym indicated that the files made no direct reference to these exemptions being officially sanctioned.¹⁷ Subsequently Freeman was tasked with gathering information on the subject.¹⁸

Freeman solicited and received a lengthy report from noted women's rights advocate Ray Strachey on the employment of married women, which was duly used by the Director of Staff Administration to support exemptions to the marriage bar.¹⁹ In a memo that reference the Strachey report, Pym advocated that:

. . . [i]f it is thought desirable that [the BBC] should take a rather less rigid line over the recruitment of married women than is taken in the Civil Service, I suggest we do not bar from appointment any married woman who is to be wholly or partly self-supporting either because her husband is permanently disabled, or by reason of separation (de jure or de facto), or desertion.²⁰

The LCC and the Civil Service position on women in similar circumstances, separated but not divorced, was much harsher. Women had to be the 'innocent' party and separation had

¹³ Memo, 26-Jan-38, TelEx to DSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

¹⁴ The DSA indicated that the BBC had exempted these categories, but he could find no evidence of an official ruling. Memo, 26-Jan-38, DSA to TelEx (bottom), *ibid.*

¹⁵ Memo, 19-May-38, GEO to C(A), *ibid.*; Cecil Madden, "Among Those Retiring . . . Miss J. Bradnock, MBE," *Ariel*, August 1964, 14.

¹⁶ Murphy, "A Marriage Bar of Convenience?," 560-561. Kate Murphy has drawn these same conclusions in her study of the BBC marriage bar.

¹⁷ Memo Response, 26-Jan-38, DSA to TelEx, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

¹⁸ Letter, 22-Jul-38, Freeman to Strachey; Memo, 28-Jul-38, GEO to WSA, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Letter, 20-Jul-38, Strachey to Freeman; Memo, 3-Oct-38, DSA to C(A), *ibid.*

²⁰ Memo, 3-Oct-38, DSA to C(A), *ibid.*

to have been instigated by the husband, although by 1936, the LCC began to soften their approach and was allowing voluntarily separated women to be re-employed.²¹ The BBC's stance would allow the Corporation to retain desperately needed women like the make-up assistant Miss Bliss who, due to her lower grade and her inability to obtain a divorce, would not fit into the stated exemption policy. However, a decision on the matter was delayed and in Bliss's case the bar was circumvented through the use of short-term contracts which were outside of the bar.²²

Beginning in 1937, the Corporation began to struggle both with finding women to work temporarily and with adhering to the marriage bar. From February to May, there were repeated memos regarding the continued use of a Mrs. Winship for relief work in various departments. In February, a request was made by the General Office Supervisor, Elizabeth Redfern, to keep Winship on after an extended period on several temporary placements – an issue that had already become contentious, as suggested by the tone of the memo. Redfern continued by stating that women often worked under their maiden names, and it could be difficult to know in advance if agency staff really were single. She further lamented that someone with a thorough knowledge of the organisation like Winship could not be allowed to continue with relief work.²³ Although acknowledging the inconsistency, the Controller of Administration, Basil Nicolls, replied to Redfern's request with a resounding no.²⁴ Despite this edict, Winship did not finish her temporary assignments until September 1937, prompting the issuing of a new rule. Henceforth, married women covering staff absences could work continuously for six months only and were limited to a maximum of eight months in any twelve-month period.²⁵ However, implementation of this new policy was delayed until September when the holiday relief crush was over.²⁶

The issue of temporary use of married women also arose over telephone switchboard operators. The establishment of a BBC telephone enquiry service had brought the problem of finding unmarried women for positions where demand exceeded supply to the fore. Again attempts to find unmarried women for the post had proved difficult, and Freeman declared: "There are no good unmarried telephonists out of jobs". Both Director of Office Administration, Ralph Wade, and Pym agreed to using three married women, Mrs. Doerr, Mrs. Osgathorpe and Mrs. Maccagno, for an extended period until two new women could be trained. Wade also noted that Nicolls had been especially keen to start the enquiry

²¹ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 216-227.

²² Memo, 19-May-38, GEO to C(A); 26-Jan-38, TelEx to GEO; Memo, 15-Jun-38, C(A) to DSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

²³ Memo, 8-Feb-37, GSO to WSA, *ibid*.

²⁴ Memo, 23-Feb-37; WSO to C(A); 24-Mar-37, C(A) to WSO, *ibid*.

²⁵ Memo, 25-May-37, C(A) to GOS, *ibid*.

²⁶ Memo, 4-Jun-37, GOS to WSA, *ibid*.

service as soon as possible.²⁷ In his endorsement, Nicolls agreed to a limited six-month extension.²⁸ By February the following year, the enquiry service was deemed successful. The *Radio Times* featured an article not just on the service, but on the two women who ran the service, Rowena Pratt and Gertrude Adcock.²⁹

However, various complex issues of married women working in temporary, or unestablished, positions continually arose over the eighteen months prior to the war. Both Helen Glew and Mark Crowley have noted that the operation of the marriage bar in the Civil Service was not as absolute as it appeared.³⁰ Former Civil Service and GPO employees were taken on seasonally or as unestablished staff, essentially continuing in service but without the benefits accorded to established staff. The practice not only masked the fact that married women were working in the public sector, but also allowed the Civil Service to evade the thorny issue of maternity benefits. In modelling their own marriage bar along the lines of the Civil Service, the BBC had taken a stricter line regarding temporary employees than the Civil Service did as indicated by their treatment of Winship. However, the Administrators were clearly aware by October 1938 that the Civil Service was more flexible with temporary employees, as Ray Strachey had specifically made this point in her report to the BBC.³¹ The arrangements had also been confirmed by the Civil Service in a letter to Pym in December 1937.³² A softening of policy towards employing married women on a temporary basis emerged from late 1938 up to the eve of war. Following the retirement of Deputy Director-General (DDG) Charles Carpendale in March of 1938, Nicolls moved into the role of Controller of Programmes vacated by Cecil G. Graves's subsequent promotion to DDG.³³ Nicolls's transfer may have triggered this softening, as Nicolls had up to this point strongly resisted Pym's and Freeman's push to remove the marriage bar.³⁴ Two episodes demonstrated this alteration in policy – the first in the catering service and the second concerning the use of former staff for relief work.

²⁷ Memo, 27-Apr-38, WSA to C(A), *ibid*.

²⁸ Memo, 27-May-38, C(A) to WSA, *ibid*.

²⁹ There is no indication in the article of Rowena Pratt's marital status, although Gertrude Adcock is referred to a Miss Adcock. Harold Rathbone, "The BBC Will Tell You," *Radio Times*, 17 February 1939, 11.

³⁰ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, Chapter Six; Crowley, "Women Post Office Workers in Britain," 78; Crowley, "Reducing, Re-Defining and Retaining," 58-59.

³¹ Memo 3-Oct-38, DSA to C(A); Letter, 20-Jul-38, R. Strachey to Freeman, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2."

³² Letter, 13-Dec-37, Parker to Pym, *ibid*.

³³ *The BBC Handbook 1938*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1938), 10, 58.

³⁴ Memo from new C(A) called for a review of the bar in cases where a woman was legally married but self-supporting. Memo, 15-Jun-38, C(A) to DSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 2." In 1937 the BBC charter was renewed. The drive to make sure BBC policies resembled those of the Civil Service may have been part of this process. The softening may also have been due to the end of the charter review period, but this aspect is outside the scope of the current chapter.

The clerical and telephone divisions had not been alone in experiencing increasing difficulty in employing single women. During the summer of 1938, Mrs. Ruby Buteaux, nee Smith, had been given special dispensation to remain in her post as Deputy Catering Manager for the summer months.³⁵ Buteaux had married in 1937 after three years of service with the Corporation, and had been working on temporary assignments since her resignation in 1937.³⁶ In mid-September Buteaux was still in place and the Catering Manager asked Ralph Wade for assistance in retaining her; Douglas Clarke and his assistant, Eric F. Ambler, were demanding her dismissal.³⁷ Although Pym had experimentally allowed the temporary use of married women for part-time catering work at the Duchess Street facility, the push to retain Buteaux appeared to quickly alter the Corporation's position on married women in catering.³⁸ After a flurry of memos, Pym had agreed that married women could be employed temporarily without limits. In order to avoid paying maternity benefits, the proviso was made that catering staff already in service would have to resign when marrying but were welcome to return on temporary contracts.³⁹ Although couched as a six-month trial, this arrangement was subsequently confirmed.⁴⁰

A few weeks before Buteaux's initial summer extension was approved, a similar issue arose over using former staff in the Registry Department. Freeman and Clarke seemed at odds over the issue of whether former permanent staff should be used on temporary assignments, in this case the use of a former Registry clerk, Mrs. Spencer, acting as holiday cover in her old department. In a strongly worded memo Clarke stated: "We are only supposed to employ married women on temporary relief jobs in cases of emergency and I cannot see where the emergency arises in the present case".⁴¹ Freeman herself noted later in the year the difficulties that retaining competent temporary staff and trying to maintain the marriage bar involved by noting ". . . that longer the longer we keep good temporary staff the harder it becomes to replace them".⁴²

Two memos from 15 March 1939 indicate that the changes in the conditions of employment for catering staff had not resulted into a lessening of restrictions on temporary staff in the clerical division. The first is a request to allow a regular temporary employee, Mrs. Baker to commence her annual holiday relief work two weeks early.⁴³ Although the

³⁵ Note, Undated, *ibid.*

³⁶ Memo, 28-Sep-38, Ambler to GEO, *ibid.*

³⁷ Memo, 12-Sep-38, Catering Manager to DOA; 14-Sep-38, DOA to Catering Manager, *ibid.*

³⁸ Memo, 12-Oct-38, GEO to Catering Manager, *ibid.*

³⁹ Memos, 30-Sep-38, DOA to Catering Manager; 3-Oct-38, Catering Manager to DOA; 2-Nov-38, DSA to DOA; 7-Nov-38, DOA to DSA, *ibid.*

⁴⁰ Meeting, 1-Jun-39, Catering Manager and GEO, *ibid.*

⁴¹ Memo, 8-Jun-38, GEO to DSA, *ibid.* Emphasis in original.

⁴² Memo, 30-Sep-38, WSA to DOA, *ibid.*

⁴³ Memo, 15-Mar-39, WSA to NREx, *ibid.*

request appeared to be allowed, the fact that Freeman made a formal request for a mere two-week extension indicated that the eight-month policy was being strictly followed. The second was an answer to the Northern Regional Executive denying the request of a newly married former staff member to work holiday relief. Freeman responded by stating that married former staff could only be used in emergency situations.⁴⁴ When the question emerged again in May 1939 over using now married Miss Chandler in the Television division, Freeman pressed the issue, stating that it seemed illogical not to use former staff for holiday relief on the same basis as agency staff. Pym agreed, thus allowing former clerical staff to work temporarily in non-emergency situation.⁴⁵

Although the BBC began to relax its strict rules against the employment of married women, this response seemed to have emerged from a tightening employment market, more than any other factor. The labour restrictions, as well as the logical inconsistencies and morale problems that emerged in the 1930s and that were discussed in Chapter Two, helped those BBC staff who supported the abandonment of the bar, which included Pym, Freeman, and Kathleen Lines, the Head of the Photographic Section, to garner wider support in the year before the war.⁴⁶ Four days before the war began, Pym noted that the bar would be suspended for the duration, even though the official announcement was not made until 2 October 1939.⁴⁷

The remainder of this discussion will focus on the lasting legacy that the marriage bar had on wartime recruitment. The policies implemented in 1930s had inadvertently deprived the organisation of precisely the type of women that would be desperately needed during the war – married women above the age of 35. In attempting to model the marriage bar on the Civil Service policy, a misunderstanding of how the Civil Service treated former employees in temporary employment had inadvertently disrupted a potential source of wartime personnel. By insisting that former secretarial staff could only work in emergencies, barring them from covering seasonal absences, many former employees in need of work were most likely already employed in other industries since the tightened labour market that emerged just before the war would have provided other opportunities. When the need for a wider variety of broadcasting output began to surge in 1940, the stage had been set for the hiring crisis that emerged.

Although the general movement towards the end of 1939 had been to relax or rescind the marriage bar, the Corporation did not seem to have identified that the advent

⁴⁴ Memo, 15-Mar39, WSA to GEO, *ibid*.

⁴⁵ Memo, 12-May-39, WSA to DSA, *ibid*.

⁴⁶ Memo, 11-Sep-39, Lines to DSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 3."

⁴⁷ Memo, 30-Aug-39, DSA to WSA, GEO & EEO; WSI-8, 2-Oct-39, *ibid*.

of war might lead to the need to greatly increase female staff numbers. At no point in the discussion of lifting the marriage bar in the 1938 to 1939 period, when war seemed imminent, did any of the major proponents of lifting the bar mention a potential staffing squeeze in the event of the war. Due to previous experience during the First World War, wartime planners might have anticipated this eventuality, but no such argument appeared to have been made. Mark Crowley noted that the GPO had made changes to its hiring in anticipation of war when men began leaving the GPO for the armed services as early as 1937. From 1935 onward, the GPO worked to retain women and increased the number of temporary workers, who were often married women.⁴⁸ The LCC moved in stages as they recognised the bar was a deterrent to marriage, and that lifting the bar would result in more marriages. Glew surmised that the LCC saw this as undesirable because married women workers were deemed problematic.⁴⁹ And as will be outlined below, the BBC at the Administration level continued to pursue a dwindling supply of male candidates before turning to women as a potential source of labour. However, by this time the women's labour draft in 1942 had brought on additional recruitment difficulties, which resulted in severe staff shortages in the lower grades at the BBC.

Once the war was under way, the BBC made two decisions that reflect the Corporation's failure to accurately predict the role of broadcasting in the face of war – the curtailment of entertainment programming, and the release of 'redundant' staff. Broadcasting was an interwar phenomenon and still a relatively new technology in 1939, and as such the BBC and other countries were uncertain about what role broadcasting would play in a war situation. In this environment, national decisions ran the gamut from the French decision to shutter its stations, to the German decision to launch a full propaganda offensive.⁵⁰ The BBC appeared to take a cautious approach in light of the expected immediate bombing offensive. To this end, operations were scaled back, and minimal programming planned. Part of this caution involved the suspension of various types of entertainment that inevitably meant they failed to take adequate measures to ensure that staffing levels would be maintained. Although the BBC quickly recognised its error on the programming side, staffing decisions made in those first fateful months would have lingering effects.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Mark J. Crowley, "Women Workers in the General Post Office, 1939-1945: Gender Conflict, or Political Emancipation?" (unpublished PhD thesis, University of London, 2010), 83, 99-102.

⁴⁹ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 205.

⁵⁰ Lacey, *Feminine Frequencies*, Chapters Four & Five.

⁵¹ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III. Sections II and III give an excellent overview of the first year of the war and the various national responses.

In July 1939, letters had been distributed to staff indicating whether their positions would be essential to the Corporation in the advent of war. Those determined to be redundant to operations, such as Television Service staff, were placed in Category C. Category C staff were required to find approved jobs in war-related industries in order to maintain resettlement rights when the war ended. Voluntary or part-time positions were not acceptable and some staff had difficulty finding positions within the required time frame.⁵² As might be expected, a significant number of staff, both male and female, also immediately resigned to join the military services. Although some Category C staff were immediately recalled on 3 September 1939, many were cheerfully encouraged to join the services, or released for jobs in directly war-related industries. Television announcers Jasmine Bligh and Elizabeth Cowell were publicly, and privately in the case of Elizabeth Cowell, encouraged in their efforts to find other employment.⁵³ As discussed in Chapter Two, the marriage bar remained in place for Category C female staff, and in cases such as Miss Ogg in Scotland little effort was made to retain their services after marriage (see page 46).⁵⁴ These actions rested on the belief that the demand for non-news broadcasting would be limited, resulting in a reduced workload for the Corporation.⁵⁵

The BBC cannot be faulted for underestimating the pivotal role that broadcasting would play in entertaining and informing the public, but because it misinterpreted its function, it failed to take steps to retain staff that would be badly needed in the coming months. Asa Briggs has documented the public's reaction to this period, which quickly became labelled the 'Bore War' or 'Sitzkrieg'. The miscalculation in programming provision was embarrassing for the Corporation, and concerted public relations efforts were made to justify the Corporation's initial response.⁵⁶ *The BBC Handbook for 1940*, as well as the 1941 publication *The BBC at War*, both addressed the issue and carefully outlined how the BBC quickly reacted to both public criticism and the absence of aerial bombardment.⁵⁷ The looming staffing crisis still lay ahead, and it was not until the launch of an ambitious triple

⁵² Mackay, "'No Place in the Corporation's Service'," 38-39; Memo, 23-Aug-39, ADOA to Staff Records, "Left Staff, Dick, Clare Lawson."; Letter, 18-Sep-39, Streeton to Cowell, "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene."

⁵³ Letter, 10-Nov-39, Cowell to Rendell, "Left Staff, Cowell, Elizabeth Eugene."

⁵⁴ Ogg had stated that she would not have resigned if she had known the consequences. There seems to have been no effort to put her back on staff to resolve the issue, possibly as she was in Category C. Memo, 23-Mar-40, Scottish Director to WSA, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 3."

⁵⁵ Memo, 17-Jun-40, GEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1." GEO Clarke indicated that the Corporation plans prior to the outbreak of war did not include expansion of services.

⁵⁶ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 75-159.

⁵⁷ Antonia White, *BBC at War* (Wembley: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1941), 4; *The BBC Handbook 1940*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1940), 9-10.

expansion project that the most severe shortages would be felt within the Administration Division.

The Triple Expansion programme was dedicated to tripling the broadcasting output on the Overseas Services, particularly in ramping up broadcasts to Europe, in English as well as other European languages. By April 1941 the organisation had already increased its staffing levels by nearly fifty percent, and the ambitious expansion would require 2,700 new staff members.⁵⁸ Briggs' discussion of the push, and its subsequent failure, highlighted the problems of expenditure and the weaknesses of then-Director-General Frederick Ogilvie's management of the BBC – an organisation quickly outgrowing a structure that had worked when it was much smaller and grew only incrementally. Briggs concluded that ultimately it was the inability of the BBC to successfully expand in 1941 that led to Ogilvie's resignation and the 1942 reorganisation, although as noted above, recruitment had been increasingly difficult in certain departments since 1938.⁵⁹ During the Triple Expansion period, 1940 to 1941 was the point where the Administration Establishment, as well as the Engineering Establishment, began to realise that reliance on female labour would be necessary. It was also the point where the two divisions reacted differently to the challenges. These reactions would result in personnel changes and ultimately drastic restructuring in the Administration Establishment.

Despite initial shortages experienced in late 1939 and early 1940, the Assistant General Establishment Officer, Eric F. Ambler, noted in a February 1940 memo that the recruitment pace was stabilising, but he still felt that the system was too chaotic and was in need of greater control.⁶⁰ In retrospect, this period was more likely a lull in the storm. By June, the stabilisation noted by Ambler had evaporated, and Ambler's superior, Douglas Clarke, was reeling under the strain. Clarke began to write increasingly frantic memos pleading that programming expansion be curtailed, as the strain that was being placed on the administrative machinery was too heavy.⁶¹ The BBC was losing staff almost as fast as they could hire them, and delays in hiring meant that many applicants had accepted alternative employment before the BBC could confirm appointments. In July, Ambler proposed recruiting and retaining a staff pool as a remedy to the rapid turnover.⁶²

⁵⁸ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 345-349.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 345-365. Ogilvie was appointed Director-General in 1938 when the first DG, John Reith, left the Corporation.

⁶⁰ Ambler and Clarke were concerned that recruitment, particularly in Monitoring and Overseas, was moving too quickly and that measures needed to be taken so that 'unsuitable' people were not taken on. Memo, 13-Feb-40, A/AGEO to GEO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1." Ambler was a career BBC administrator and should not be confused with the author Eric C. Ambler.

⁶¹ Memo, 17-Jun-40, GEO to DSA; 21-Jun-40, GEO to DSA, *ibid*.

⁶² Memo, 1-Jul-40, AGEO to GEO, *ibid*.

The upper-level managers seemed unaware of the difficulties that those in charge of hiring were experiencing. Instead of acknowledging the tight labour market, blame for failures to fill open positions, or a perceived lack of 'quality' in those hired, was placed on hiring managers. In October 1940, Ralph Wade expressed dissatisfaction with the new House Staff recruits' fitness for duty. The memos inferred that the House Superintendent was faulted, as hiring duties were removed from him.⁶³ The bad behaviour and appearance of a new commissioner had even been noted at a Board of Governors meeting.⁶⁴ Proposals had already been made during the summer to have both the Administration Establishment and the Women's Establishment take over the recruitment of House Staff. The Women's Establishment became involved when the House Superintendent indicated he wanted to hire women as lift operators – a position formerly reserved for men.⁶⁵ However, Clarke's department was unable to assume these duties until the end of 1940 when L. MacEwan assumed the role.⁶⁶ In the Women's Establishment, Miss Love began hiring female House Staff in early 1941, and Freeman suggested in May 1941 that Love also be responsible for recruiting female catering staff.⁶⁷

In the midst of this struggle to find staff, two of the principal staff in charge of hiring were transferred to other departments. Douglas Clarke, who had served in the role under various titles since 1928, was promoted to the post of Director of Programme Administration in April 1941, a position overseeing the Programme Executives.⁶⁸ The Board of Governors also approved Gweneth Freeman's transfer to the position of Staff Welfare Officer in February 1941, with little reference made to her after her replacement in September of that year.⁶⁹ There is no direct evidence in the BBC archive files to indicate that their transfers were the result of recruitment failures. However, two outside people were brought in to fill the gaps with a seeming mandate to streamline and improve recruitment procedures.⁷⁰

⁶³ Memo, 1-Oct-40, DOA to DSA, *ibid*.

⁶⁴ Minutes, 29-Jan-41, Red Notes, "Board of Governors, Minutes," (BBC WAC R1/9/1, 1941).

⁶⁵ Memo, 26-Aug-40, GEO to WSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁶⁶ Memo, 2-Jan-41, ONEx to DPA(O), *ibid*.

⁶⁷ Memo, 8-Jan-41, WSA to DOA; 5-May-41, WSA to GEO, *ibid*.

⁶⁸ Letter, 16-May-39, GEO to DSA; Application, 8-Apr-49, "Left Staff, Clarke, Douglas Hardcastle."t

⁶⁹ Minute 77, 26-Feb-41, "Board of Governors, Minutes."

⁷⁰ "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."; "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."; "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."; "Staff Policy, Women's Establishment Officer, Administration Procedure." See these files generally for the 1941 to 1942 period.

THE CRISIS OF EXPANSION

Having regard however to the restrictions now imposed on our recruiting, I would suggest that it might be advisable to call the attention of Divisions to the difficulty which may arise of keeping up the high standard which up to now we have been able to maintain, while appreciating the natural desire of Divisions to get the best material, I have noticed not alone a tendency to reject applicants put up by this section in the hope of "something better coming along later", but also in some cases a disinclination to consider women for appointments which up to now we have been able to fill by men. The discretionary power allowed to Divisions has probably worked very well in the past when the staff of the BBC was not so large and the recruitment field was practically unlimited.

W.D. Kenny, Recruitment Director⁷¹

The BBC's willingness to reassess their approach to wartime programming after their initial failures in 1939 did not extend to jettisoning their standards and methods of recruitment. As the quote above suggests, the BBC continued its efforts to identify specific types of male candidates, to the almost total exclusion of considering both women and older men for the roles. The problems had begun in June 1940 when the draft age for administrative posts was raised from twenty-five to thirty. This change in draft conditions coincided with Douglas Clarke's strenuous urging for a reduction in programming output. Clarke's recommendations also occurred almost simultaneously with the fall of France, at which point expansion of overseas programming became even more of a priority both to the BBC and to the government.⁷² To cope with the increasing restrictions on employment, in the autumn various managers began suggesting potential sources of male employees rather than considering filling the positions with female staff. Many of these strategies had already been pursued with little success.

For example, Executive Assistant to the Controller of Programmes, Seymour J. de Lotbinière, suggested to Pym that establishments such as John Lewis might have surplus employees after it was severely bombed.⁷³ This source had already failed to produce any candidates, as staff had been employed clearing up the damage.⁷⁴ Several memos were exchanged on recruiting men from the Dominions, particularly Canada, and the United

⁷¹ Memo, 24-Jan-42, RD to DDSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

⁷² Memo, 17-Jun-40, GEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1." In this memo, Clarke had listed a number of justifications for scaling back the programming, including potential casualties and the Blitz bombing. The memo also states: 'It is perhaps fair to mention the fact that before the war began we envisaged a limited wartime service. It seems to me that we are rapidly approaching a condition of things similar to that which we expected before last September. I have no reason to support that our ideas of last summer, given the expected circumstances were wrong.' Clarke seemed to have noted that programme reduction would not be possible as a note at the bottom indicated that the memo had been dictated before Dunkirk.

⁷³ Memo, 30-Sep-40, ExAC(P) to DSA, *ibid*.

⁷⁴ Memo, 8-Oct-40, Freeston to DSA, *ibid*. Freeston referred to a previous attempt to hire redundant John Lewis fire watchers and enclosed a newspaper clipping. Freeston said all able-bodied men had been employed in clearing up after sustaining heavy bomb damage. However, the article referenced stated that it was female assistants that had been used in the clean-up efforts.

States.⁷⁵ The Control Board continued to discuss this possibility until December 1941.⁷⁶ By January 1941, Overseas News Executive R.W.P. Cockburn suggested Fleet Street was a potential source, and recommended offering £800 per annum to potential recruits, a salary that was well above the usual level for the posts being considered. He further recommended contacting universities, public schools, the City, and the legal profession. Cockburn also included potentially identifying female candidates from universities and public schools.⁷⁷ A few weeks later, the Board of Directors also urged greater consideration of female candidates to replace male employees, but in January 1941 this potential recruitment avenue received little attention from the Administration Establishment.⁷⁸

Assistant Overseas Establishment Officer W.R. Baker mapped out a campaign that included consultation with the Federation of British Industry to recruit “. . . men for our forthcoming Overseas expansion from the industrial world”.⁷⁹ Baker felt the BBC could benefit from a scheme devised by Captain Oliver Lyttelton, the President of the Board of Trade, which was a coordinated rationalisation of industry designed to release staff from redundant and non-essential industries to supply personnel for war industries and government positions.⁸⁰ Lyttelton’s intention was to foster efficient industrial output and was not strictly intended to free up male labour. As men involved in the export market and commercial trade often had modern language skills due to the international aspects of the sector, Baker thought this industrial rationalisation would dislodge men useful to the Corporation.⁸¹ Baker’s campaign was to include contacting Chambers of Commerce and advertising in trade journals of industries affected by the Lyttelton Scheme. The recruitment needs were estimated to be 500 men with 250 places for sub-editors and language experts.⁸² None of these suggestions seemed to result in any significant increases in male staff.⁸³

⁷⁵ Memo, 3-Dec-40, A/C(A) to DSA; 2-Jan-41, AC(A) to DSA; 4-Feb-41, A/C(A) to DSA; 28-Feb-41, DPA(O) to EEx et. al.; 17-Mar-41, DSA to C(A), 29-Apr-41, OEO to DOPA, *ibid*.

⁷⁶ Minutes, 12-Nov-41, Minute 668; 18-Nov-41, Minute 681; 10-Dec-41, Minute 730; 17-Dec-41, Minute 739, "Control Board, Reconstituted Control Board Minutes," (BBC WAC R3/6/1, 1941).

⁷⁷ Memo, 2-Jan-41, ONEx to DPA(O), "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁷⁸ Minutes, 29-Jan-41, Red Notes, "Board of Governors, Minutes."

⁷⁹ Memo, 7-Mar-41, AOEO to OEO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁸⁰ "War Production Policy (Government Proposals)", HC Deb, 04-Mar-41, vol 369, cc 774-8, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1941/mar/04/war-production-policy-government#S5CV0369PO_19410304_HOC_200, accessed, 20-9-2018.

⁸¹ Hilary Footitt and Simona Tobia, *War Talk: Foreign Languages and the British War Effort in Europe, 1940-47* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), 17. The authors discussed how commercial firms were the most likely to hire those with modern-language skills. G.M. Miller who would later become the Pronunciation Assistant for the BBC had a degree in Modern Languages from University of Glasgow, but completed a commercial secretarial course to improve her job prospects. Testimonial, 5-Jun-34, Eggeling, "Left Staff, Miller, Gertrude Mary."

⁸² Memo, 7-Mar-41, AOEO to OEO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁸³ Memo, 11-Mar-41, AOEO to OEO; 21-Apr-41, OEO to DMS, *ibid*.

Following Clarke's promotion, the role of GEO was initially filled by Robert Burns, and then J.G. Roberts.⁸⁴ However by the end of 1941, the GEO's role in recruitment appeared to be subsumed under that of the newly established role of Recruitment Director, filled by William D. Kenny, who attempted to centralise and consolidate all aspects of recruitment.⁸⁵ The decision to create a Recruitment Division out of the existing Administration and Women's Establishment machinery was made in June 1941, and even before new management staff were hired, new methods and targets were being tried.⁸⁶

The first to be hired was Gweneth Freeman's replacement, Gladys L. Burlton, who was discussed in Chapter Two (see page 40). She joined the Women's Establishment in mid-September 1941, and quickly started contacting schools and universities for potential recruits.⁸⁷ The Recruitment Director's first efforts were geared towards centralising interviewing and hiring, and as the quote above suggests, getting departmental managers to face up to the wartime employment market.⁸⁸ According to Kenny's account, he then reorganised and implemented the new managerial structure in the Recruitment Section.⁸⁹ Kenny, a career military officer, was retired from the Royal Inniskillin Fusiliers before joining the BBC.⁹⁰ The War Office had thought highly enough of Kenny to recommend him to the BBC when they had been frantically trying to find capable administrators.⁹¹

With these two at the helm the Administration Division and the Women's Establishment began a frantic period of analysis and re-organisation. Burlton did much to establish and regiment administrative procedures, particularly among weekly-paid clerical grades. There is some indication that her plans and forms were seen as a duplication or unnecessary circumvention of existing BBC administrative methods, as her procedures were examined and critiqued by Miss Chadwick, at the request of Patrick E. Cruttwell, Assistant

⁸⁴ Memo, 5-May-41, GEO to WSA, *ibid*. This is the first memo in the file signed by Burns as GEO.

⁸⁵ Organisation Chart, c. Jan-42, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2." This internal organisation chart for the Recruitment Section that is in the Staff Recruitment files for 1942 does not place GEO under the Recruitment Director, but it is difficult to determine if the chart is a proposed chain of command, or an existing one.

⁸⁶ This included channelling interview records through the recruitment officers to avoid re-interviewing rejected candidates, and establishment of the recruitment pool. WSI-105, 28-Aug-41; Memo, 30-Aug-41, GEO to DPA; 6-Sep-41, EEx to DOPA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁸⁷ Memo/Attachments, 2-Oct-41, WSA to DDSA, *ibid*.

⁸⁸ Memo, 24-Jan-42, RD to DDSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2." It is evident from the file that Kenny was fighting against entrenched practices. This memo to A.C. Cameron outlines how practices at the BBC were hampering recruitment. It is also apparent from Cameron's scrawled response at the bottom that resistance to the practices would be expected.

⁸⁹ Letter/Attachment, 6-Aug-42, Kenny to DG Foot, "Left Staff, Kenny, Lt. Col. William David," (BBC WAC L1/236/1, 1941).

⁹⁰ "Central Chancery of the Orders of Knighthood," *Supplement to the London Gazette*, 3 July 1926 1926, 4408.

⁹¹ Letter/Attachments, 6-Aug-42, Kenny to DG Foot, "Left Staff, Kenny, Lt. Col. William David."

Director of Staff Administration.⁹² As outlined in Chapter Two, Burlton also strenuously advocated lifting the marriage bar for all BBC employees (see page 46). Kenny's goal was to rationalise and centralise recruitment. BBC files indicate that there was much respect for their efforts, but also resistance to change within the organisation. Deputy Director of Staff Administration A.C. Cameron noted at the bottom of a memo highly critical of BBC procedure sent by Kenny, that while he agreed with Kenny's assessment, he was hampered by the "Board".⁹³

Both Burlton and Kenny did much to push the utilisation of women, not just in secretarial roles, but also in higher administrative positions. Burlton's first task was to establish connections with the Principals and women's tutors at the major universities and colleges across Britain. A sample letter in the BBC archives indicates that she had already been consulted in this matter before being selected as WEO.⁹⁴ Although Cockburn had first suggested looking at universities and public schools for female staff in January 1941, real movement to recruit women from these sources did not gain momentum until Burlton's arrival in October. As will be explored in greater detail in the next chapter, the Engineering Division had been pursuing women from as early as April 1941, and had an almost six-month head start on the Administration Division.⁹⁵ During this six-month period, the Administration Division was still tentatively exploring this possibility, and appeared reluctant to use women without top qualifications in roles other than secretarial roles or as production assistants.

Despite the BBC's new attention to using women as a potential source of badly needed staff, the new General Establishment Officer, Robert Burns, appeared to indicate to the Treasury that the BBC was looking for women with more qualifications than the government was. In a response to a Treasury letter in December 1941, Burns stated that he considered women of the level of Civil Service Assistant Principals to only be worth considering as "... writers, producers, research assistants, etc." He went on to insist that it was rare to find women with the appropriate maturity and experience for more responsible roles, creating considerable limitations on their employment.⁹⁶ The original letter from the Treasury that Burns was responding to is not in the file, so some of the context of his

⁹² Memos, 25-Feb-42; 5-Mar-42, Chadwick to ADSA, "Staff Policy, Women's Establishment Officer, Administration Procedure."

⁹³ Memo, 27-Jan-42, DDSA to RD, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2." The entire quote is "PRIVATE, Rec. D. I quite agree but can do nothing until I have cleaned up the [ill] of [ill] "Board" which has fairly queered the pitch."

⁹⁴ Form Letter, 21-July-41, from Burlton, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

⁹⁵ Memo, 30-May-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid*.

⁹⁶ Letter, 1-Dec-41, GEO to Burns (Treasury), *ibid*.

response was unclear. However, the essential question of quality and qualifications of potential staff members was one that would emerge many times over the course of the war.

At different points, Burlton and Kenny both discussed the quality of new recruits. Burlton's proposal was to improve quality through training. Burlton proposed establishing a training programme for new, especially inexperienced staff almost immediately after she was hired. Her proposal was warmly received by both the BBC Control Board and the Board of Governors.⁹⁷ Kenny insisted that BBC managers were clinging to pre-war standards in a radically changed wartime labour market and were refusing to face reality. Kenny found this insistence on finding the perfect candidate, and the reluctance to consider female candidates frustrating.⁹⁸ Although the BBC had long demonstrated a willingness to use women in more responsible positions, acceptance of women filling more senior roles at the BBC was met with less enthusiasm.⁹⁹ In 1926, the then Director-General John Reith had expressed the belief that that women could potentially rise to the senior executive level, but he remained sceptical that such a qualified woman could be found.¹⁰⁰ Although Reith would later hire Hilda Matheson as Director of Talks, and promote Mary Somerville to the Director of School Broadcasts, opportunities for advancement for women remained the exception rather than the rule. Even though the Corporation would hire some women directly to administrative roles during the war, such as Joanna Spicer, the chance to rise to a higher level during the war continued to be limited.¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ "Control Board, Reconstituted Control Board Minutes."; "Board of Governors, Minutes."

⁹⁸ Memo, Jan-42, RD to DSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

⁹⁹ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 153-188.

¹⁰⁰ 30-Apr-26, DG to All Station Directors, "Staff Policy, Women Assistants."

¹⁰¹ "Left Staff, Spicer, Joanna Ravenscroft, File 2."

REORGANISATION AND REFORM

... if we miss any opportunity now I think you may find yourself in a very difficult position if they insist on calling up the younger secretaries in October and there is a sudden clamour for new ones and no source of supply. I am rather pushing this because although things are all right for the moment, I believe this to be the most dangerous point, more dangerous than the activities of the Kennet Committee, and here as with the men we are in a less satisfactory position than the Civil Service.¹⁰²

As management and hiring spiralled seemingly out of control during 1940 and 1941, the Board of Governors hired Robert Foot, an Executive from the Gas, Coal and Coke Board, in late 1941 to conduct a review of the BBC's administrative systems. During this same time period the Board of Governors decided that Director-General Frederick Ogilvie needed to be replaced. Ogilvie was requested by the Chairman of the Board to tender his resignation in January 1942. Although Ogilvie's resignation was triggered by a conflict with the Monitoring Service, this misstep was part of a litany of complaints about Ogilvie's management style. Foot was then hired as a joint Director-General, along with then-DDG Cecil Graves. Foot became the sole Director-General in May 1943 when Graves retired due to ill health. Foot resigned in March 1944 and was succeeded by William Haley.¹⁰³ A few months after Ogilvie's departure, a reorganisation of the administrative structure began, which was in place by July 1942. Although the administrative control over various departments was diminished, and the overall structure of the BBC became decentralised, the Department of Administration retained control of hiring.¹⁰⁴

Both these moves were part of a step to siphon central control away from London. The architect of the reorganisation was temporary Controller of Administration George Beadle.¹⁰⁵ As a former West Regional Director, Beadle, who had been with the Corporation since the early 1920s, probably had long held beliefs that the London Office asserted too much control over the regions.¹⁰⁶ Frictions of this sort were still evident during the war.

¹⁰² Memo, 26-Aug-42, DDSA to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1." The Kennet Committee was a committee established to evaluate and approve requests for deferment of male staff in the Civil Service, and later evaluated applications for male staff in the BBC's monthly-paid grades. The requests were considered on a case-by-case basis. Other committees existed for different categories of staff.

¹⁰³ Minute-45, 21-Jan-42; Minute-57, 26-Jan-42, "Board of Governors Minutes," (BBC WAC R1/10/1, 1942); Minute-385, 28-Oct-41, "Board of Governors, Minutes."; Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 361-365; Minutes, 25-Oct-43, "Staff Policy, Staff Association, Meetings, File 1a," (BBC WAC R49/666/1, 1940-1945); *The BBC Year Book 1945*, 8.

¹⁰⁴ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 534-541.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 479. Briggs cites a letter from Beadle to D.H. Clarke in which Beadle claimed that the plans followed by Foot had been suggested to Foot by Beadle.

¹⁰⁶ Interview, 6-Sep-40, Beadle and Ogilvie, "Left Staff, Beadle, Gerald Clayton," (BBC WAC L2/19/1-2, 1923). Beadle had joined the BBC in September 1923 as a temporary announcer but had resigned in 1924 for two years to work for South African Broadcasting. He returned to the BBC in October 1926 and was shortly after named Station Director in Belfast. Memo, 28-Aug-44, WRD to AC(P), "Left Staff, Wayne, Jenifer." Although this memo refers to an incident after the reorganisation in 1942, Beadle expressed a frustration at the London office taking precedent, and prestige, away from the regions.

The discussion in Chapter Two regarding jurisdiction over the WSOs exemplifies this conflict (see page 41). As part of the 1942 reorganisation, Beadle was not confirmed in his temporary role. By early 1943 he reverted to his former post of West Region Director, with a subsequent loss in grade and pay.¹⁰⁷ Briggs, referencing Beadle's own memoirs, cited a slipped disk as part of the reason, while BBC records indicated that the reorganisation eliminated options for Beadle to remain in London.¹⁰⁸

However, Beadle was not the only person to revert to a former position as a result of the 1942 reorganisation. Former GEO Douglas Clarke was also brought back into what was essentially his former role. His former post and that of Recruitment Director were combined and retitled Appointments Officer.¹⁰⁹ Like Beadle, this reversion represented a loss of grade and pay.¹¹⁰ Clarke's re-designation also accompanied a further controversy. The Recruitment Director, William Kenny, who had been active in reorganising recruitment methods and streamlining the department, fully expected to continue in his role. Kenny was unpleasantly surprised when William Pym approached him on the morning of 2 July 1942 and informed him that Clarke would be taking over that afternoon. Kenny was rather voluble in his criticism of the BBC's actions, and reported his treatment to his contacts at the War Office, even suggesting that Clarke was being found a place to avoid being drafted.¹¹¹ Although Pym indicated that the Corporation would try to find a suitable role for Kenny, by July Kenny's contract had been officially terminated.¹¹²

By the time the reorganisation had taken place the BBC growth had slowed considerably, and major recruitment procedures had largely been resolved, leaving Clarke with an efficient machinery no longer in crisis.¹¹³ However, one element of recruitment that had not been resolved fully for the BBC by July 1942 was the hiring of female staff members. Just as the BBC had started to accept the need to use women in a wider variety of roles, the government had also reached the same conclusion, and a women's labour draft was initiated in January 1942. The labour draft, or the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement Order), is referred to in BBC files as the Control of Engagement Order. The order followed the December 1941 National Service (Number 2) Act. Combined, these regulations obligated women aged twenty to thirty to enter military and war-related service. Both the National Service Act and the Control of Engagement Order included exemptions

¹⁰⁷ Note, 30-Sep-43, Chairman, "Left Staff, Beadle, Gerald Clayton."

¹⁰⁸ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 552; "Left Staff, Beadle, Gerald Clayton."

¹⁰⁹ Interview, 2-Jul-42, Graves and Clarke; Report, 12-Jan-42, AppO to DSA, "Left Staff, Clarke, Douglas Hardcastle."

¹¹⁰ Interview, 2-Jul-42, Graves and Clarke, *ibid*.

¹¹¹ Letter, 6-Aug-42, Kenny to DG Foot, "Left Staff, Kenny, Lt. Col. William David."

¹¹² Letter, 10-Jul-42, DSA to Kenny; Memo, 7-Aug-42, DSA to Accounts, *ibid*.

¹¹³ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 551.

for women with children under fourteen or those with substantial household responsibilities. In early 1942, the draft ages for men also widened, and transfers to exempt occupations were no longer possible.¹¹⁴ These changes made the recruitment of female staff both more desirable and more problematic, and the BBC was forced to alter their hiring patterns.

Prior to the institution of the women's labour draft, the Civil Service had already noted that the government was in direct competition with the BBC for potential recruits.¹¹⁵ In 1942, a layer of control was added to this competition. Although the BBC had negotiated a release of women in the 1918 to 1922 age cohorts, all other BBC appointments of women under the age of thirty-one, a limit later raised to forty, had to be approved by the MOLNS.¹¹⁶ Over the course of the war this became even more complicated, as regional jurisdictions prevented the BBC from transferring staff from one location to another.¹¹⁷ Certain areas had greater needs for staff in war-related industries, and a transfer could mean that a female staff member could be taken away from the BBC in the process. Some of these jurisdictional clashes occurred in the greater London area, meaning that shorthand-typists from outlying areas such as Woolwich, Perivale or Acton could not work in Broadcasting House in central London.¹¹⁸ All new appointments had to be approved by the MOLNS, and again varying regional policies could affect the BBC's success rate in obtaining approval of new appointments.¹¹⁹ Finally, the MOLNS also began to restrict the BBC's ability to advertise open posts.¹²⁰

The BBC was at a disadvantage as its major competitor was also in control of its ability to appoint potential staff. Negotiations between the MOLNS and the BBC recruitment staff highlight these frustrations. Clarke led the negotiations, and at one point had received the impression that the BBC held a recruitment status on par with other government organisations.¹²¹ The MOLNS had different ideas, and indicated to Clarke that although viewed favourably, the BBC did not have the same priority as government departments or war-related industries.¹²² When Clarke raised the issue of MOLNS obstructions to his superiors, the BBC tried to enlist the assistance of the MOI, by asking the MOI to intervene

¹¹⁴ WSI-181, 7-Aug-42, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹¹⁵ Memo, 22-Oct-41, Davie to Whiteman, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation," (LAB 8/171, 1939).

¹¹⁶ Letter, 4-Sep-42, Baker to Burns (MOLNS)"Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹¹⁷ Memo, 21-Sep-42, Baker to DG Foot, *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ Report, 7-Apr-43, AppO on Women Clerical Staff, *ibid*.; Memo, 27-Oct-42, AppO to Heats of Establishments,"Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

¹¹⁹ WSI-181, 7-Aug-42, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹²⁰ Memo, 3-Mar-43, AppO to Foot, *ibid*.

¹²¹ Memo, 21-Apr-43, AppO to WarSO, *ibid*.

¹²² Meeting, 23-Oct-42, BBC and MOLNS *ibid*.

with the MOLNS on behalf of the BBC.¹²³ The Minister of Information, Brendan Bracken, did not reply directly, but relayed through an intermediary that the BBC's independence from strict government oversight placed the Corporation at a disadvantage with recruitment. As one of many quasi-government agencies, the government could not afford to advantage the BBC over other such agencies, and the BBC should negotiate as best it could with the MOLNS.¹²⁴ Clarke was ultimately frustrated in gaining sweeping concessions from the MOLNS, and focussed subsequent attention on gaining targeted concessions for higher-priority areas such as Monitoring and News Typists.¹²⁵ The Engineering department had entered into much more successful negotiations with the MOLNS, and the contrasts in approaches will be outlined in Chapter Four.

On top of strained relations with the MOLNS, a War Cabinet paper on staff reduction put pressure on the BBC to effect a ten percent cut in staffing.¹²⁶ Almost simultaneously, the MOLNS insisted that further assistance would be predicated on the BBC rationalising its use of woman power.¹²⁷ Although he privately doubted that any further savings could be made, Foot issued Wartime Staff Instruction 231 on 30 March 1943, on the subject of 'Economy in Woman Power.'¹²⁸ Following the dictates of the MOLNS, Foot asked for departmental reports on the possibility of further reductions in clerical staff, especially through the creation of secretarial pools, part-time staff, and a reduction in typewritten material. All areas of the Corporation were to explore ways to put these suggestions into effect, and to report back to Foot by the end of April.¹²⁹ As Foot had suspected, the overwhelming response was that all practicable reductions had already been made. The only measurable reductions required discontinuing, or outsourcing, printing of indexes, reports, and talks.¹³⁰ This outsourcing suggestion was ultimately also deemed impracticable.¹³¹ The BBC already had been attentive to the need to both maximise its workforce and the need to curry favour with the MOLNS, and these strategies had been pursued since at least May 1942.¹³²

¹²³ Letter, 8-Jul-43, Foot to Bracken (MOI), *ibid*.

¹²⁴ Letter, 29-Jun-43, Ratcliffe (MOI) to Foot, *ibid*.

¹²⁵ Memo, 22-Oct-43, DDG to DG, *ibid*.

¹²⁶ Memo, 19-Feb-43, WarSO to RO(C), *ibid*.

¹²⁷ "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

¹²⁸ Memo, 9-Mar-43, WarSO to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹²⁹ WSI-231, 30-Mar-43, "Staff Policy, Economy in Woman Power," (BBC WAC R49/158, 1942-1943).

¹³⁰ Report, 19-Jun-42, *ibid*.

¹³¹ Letter, 23-Oct-43, AppO to Woodburn (MOI), "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹³² WSI-197, 21-8-42, *ibid*.

These suggestions from the MOLNS indicated that the Ministry did not fully understand the BBC's use of woman power. The MOLNS seemed to suggest that both secretarial staff and typewritten material was an extravagance in which the BBC was indulging. In October 1942, Clarke had met with the MOLNS about continued problems with recruitment, especially of shorthand typists, and was met with the accusation that the BBC was not working its staff a full fifty-one hours per week, an accusation he hotly contested.¹³³ This suggestion that the BBC was under-utilising female staff appeared in various memos, but seemed to have stemmed from individual complaints that had come to the attention of the MOLNS.¹³⁴

Other BBC staff noted that the MOLNS underestimated the value of the BBC's secretarial ranks to the Corporation. When the MOLNS pressed Cameron on the issue of pay scales for BBC women in 1941, he demurred. The MOLNS indicated that it was embarrassing that the BBC paid a £280 per annum starting salary while the Civil Service offered only £260, but Cameron insisted that the BBC's needs were different from those of the Civil Service. The Ministry agreed with Cameron that the MOLNS Central Board would not be effective in recruiting BBC Personal Secretaries as there was not a Civil Service equivalent.¹³⁵ In a 1942 internal memo, Cameron noted the unique character of BBC secretaries. Cameron posited that senior secretaries at the BBC would have the rank of Assistant Principal in the Civil Service, and that this misunderstanding about the role of secretary at the BBC fuelled the MOLNS's scepticism on trying to retain secretarial staff.¹³⁶ Ralph Wade made an almost identical observation when reporting on a meeting with a Treasury staff member.¹³⁷

Even shorthand-typists seemed to have been expected to assume more responsible duties in the absence of their superiors. Wade suggested that a less able shorthand-typist be replaced in Buying and Stores, as the shorthand-typist was expected to be in charge when her frequently absent boss Mr. Bennellick was away.¹³⁸ In Bedford, where the Music Department was evacuated, the Director had merged the post of Billeting Officer and shorthand-typist into one role, with the typist assuming the superior role of Billeting Officer.¹³⁹ The Engineer-in-Charge (EIC) in Bedford, terrified of losing his secretarial help,

¹³³ Memo, 27-Oct-42, AppO to DG Foot, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

¹³⁴ Memo, 3-Mar-43, AppO to DG Foot; 9-Mar-43, WarSO to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹³⁵ Report, 29-Sep-41, signed AW, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation." Report, 29 September 1941, signed AW,

¹³⁶ Memo, 26-Aug-42, DDSA to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹³⁷ Memo, 31-Aug-43, Wade to DSA, "Staff Policy, Economy in Woman Power."

¹³⁸ Memo, 20-Aug-43, Wade to Assistant Head of Buying and Stores, *ibid.*

¹³⁹ Memo, 1-Apr-43, Bedford Director to Joint DG, *ibid.*

suggested she train to be a part-time Technical Assistant, arguing that she had a good grasp of physics and had been quietly studying radio principles for a year. She had even “picked up” telephone operation and was acting as an emergency telephonist.¹⁴⁰ This misunderstanding between the government ministries and the BBC highlights how the BBC was much more fluid in its deployment of staff. It also underscores some of the reasoning behind their pay scales.

The BBC continued to cling to two standards which made recruiting female staff even more difficult. The first issue was the standard of pay. As the labour market tightened, women’s wages also rose. Across the private sector, pay for typists increased, while the Civil Service’s and the BBC’s rates stagnated. The MOLNS had earlier in the war put pressure on the BBC to lower its rates to conform with Civil Service pay grades.¹⁴¹ However, the Civil Service issue with BBC pay rates pre-dated the war crisis, as a section of the Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935, the Ullswater Report, criticised the Corporation for offering rates above that of the Civil Service.¹⁴² By 1942, the rates the BBC offered clerical staff had dipped well below those of the private sector. Recruitment Officer Dorothy Tomlinson reported that the BBC was paying slightly more than £4 per week for a shorthand typist with language skills, as opposed to the £6 to £7 per week that was offered on the open market.¹⁴³ The Corporation also had trouble hiring News Typists at less than £5.5.0 in 1945, a position that did not require shorthand.¹⁴⁴ Tomlinson suggested that the Corporation forego contacting employment agencies for secretarial staff as the BBC’s pay rates were uncompetitive.¹⁴⁵ Tomlinson felt at a disadvantage both from private employers, and the Civil Service. Although the Civil Service also offered low wages, Tomlinson indicated that the MOLNS had the authority to direct women into government work, leaving women subject to the labour draft unable to dispute the wage levels.¹⁴⁶

However, many new BBC staff were not even receiving £4 per week. Increasingly, women under the age of eighteen were being employed, and as a rule received much less. Sixteen-year-old shorthand-typists were paid only £2.5.6 per week, and seventeen-year-

¹⁴⁰ Memo, 3-Sep-42, EiC Bedford to SE(S), "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 2," (BBC WAC R49/941/3, 1942).

¹⁴¹ Minutes, 22-Oct-41, Davis to Whiteman, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

¹⁴² "Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935," 14.

¹⁴³ Memo, 6-Feb-43, RO(C) to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1." The base rate was £3.19.0 plus 7/6d, and 10/- per language, which was stipulated as French and German.

¹⁴⁴ Memo, 22-Jun-45, RT&O(C) to ASAO, "Staff Policy, Grades and Salaries, News Typists, ," (BBC WAC R49/232, 1942-1953).

¹⁴⁵ Memo, 30-Mar-43, RO(C) to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁴⁶ Memo, 7-Apr-43, RO(C), *ibid*.

olds £2.8.2 per week.¹⁴⁷ Women would not reach a full wage until they reached the age of twenty-one, the preferred hiring age of the Corporation before the war began.¹⁴⁸ A former BBC secretary who joined the Corporation at the age of seventeen in 1943, confirmed that her salary was low enough to make even an occasional night out nearly impossible.¹⁴⁹ Despite a strong push to raise the wage across the secretarial grades in 1942 and 1943, the idea was abandoned in August 1943. Clarke reported that the situation created by the Control of Engagement Order had obviated the need to push for higher wages. The women now available to the Corporation were either under eighteen or over forty, concluding that '[BBC] rates are sufficiently attractive for these people, who are really not worth more'.¹⁵⁰

A second BBC policy that also hampered recruitment was the preferred age and experience ranges for staff. The BBC took great pains to present itself as a youthful organisation.¹⁵¹ This even filtered down to employment practices, with strict rules of engagement and retirement. Salaried staff were not hired over the age of forty-five, and weekly-paid staff had to be under fifty.¹⁵² These rules may not have been unusual at the time, and the BBC's rules were predicated on having at least fifteen years in service for purposes of the pension scheme.¹⁵³ There were no other limits on entry before reaching the upper age limits. In contrast, the Civil Service had a long-standing policy of hiring most of its staff in three classes with strict ages of entry – the administrative grade for university graduates, the executive grade for entry between the ages of eighteen and nineteen, and the clerical grade for entry between the ages of sixteen and seventeen.¹⁵⁴

The Corporation clung to their defined age limits even up to 1940 before relaxing their standards. This was an incongruous position as wartime staff were designated as unestablished, and therefore not eligible to participate in the pension scheme. Under relaxed rules, BBC recruitment of men between the age of forty and sixty was fine, but a recent hire of a sixty-eight-year old in the Music Library was questioned.¹⁵⁵ Women under the age of twenty-one were still being reluctantly considered in 1940. Former BBC staff member Mary Garratt recalled that she had been turned down twice by the BBC before

¹⁴⁷ Memo, 1-Oct-42, RO(C) to Beadle, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2."

¹⁴⁸ Mary Garratt, interview by Kate Terkanian, 2015.

¹⁴⁹ Elizabeth Forty, interview by Kate Terkanian, 2015.

¹⁵⁰ Memo, 13-Aug-43, AppO to ADSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁵¹ Memo, 12-Mar-41, Mr Hopper to DOCD, "Publicity, Newspapers, Picture Post, File 1," (BBC WAC R44/353/1, 1938-1946). The memo regards BBC reaction to a multi-page spread on the BBC in *Picture Post*. Hopper states that the public will form a good impression of the organisation from the article. He specifically notes that: "It conveys the impression of a young and vigorous organisation doing valuable war work mostly unknown to the public."

¹⁵² Memo, 14-Jun-39, GEO to AGE0, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

¹⁵³ Memo, 22-Jun-38, DSA to EEO, *ibid*.

¹⁵⁴ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 38.

¹⁵⁵ Memo, 25-Apr-40, GEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

being accepted as a Technical Assistant in the Engineering Department. Her first application at the age of twelve was not taken seriously as the BBC only hired young boys as messengers, and only at the school leaving age of fourteen. Girls of the same age were not considered for similar roles. Garratt's second attempt was in 1937 when she was seventeen. On her second attempt, she was encouraged to reapply when she turned twenty-one.¹⁵⁶ The most lamentable problem that BBC recruiters faced was their lack of ability to hire the young, vigorous men and women that was felt necessary for the exacting work that needed to be performed.¹⁵⁷ In comparison, the GC&CS had access to women in their early twenties. Women in the WAAF and the Women's Royal Navy Service (WRNS) were sent to Bletchley in large numbers as machine operators, though paid as little as £30 per annum depending on their rank.¹⁵⁸

PART-TIME STAFF

The MOLNS also encouraged the BBC to consider hiring part-time workers, a type of employment that was unusual in pre-war British offices. To the BBC this meant hiring older women and women with domestic responsibilities. These two classes of women were seen as less desirable not just because they were deemed not to possess the required levels of stamina, but also because their domestic responsibilities might prevent them from performing shift work.¹⁵⁹ The GPO employed women on a part-time basis, especially as night telephone operators. However, the Union of Post Office Workers (UPW) viewed part-time work as a mechanism to lower wages and therefore insisted that part-time wages should be at a higher rate than full-time work, and that consideration be given for travel time and meal times.¹⁶⁰ Part-time workers were only seriously considered and pursued by the BBC after the Wartime Staff Instruction on Economy in Woman Power (WSI 231) was issued in 1943.¹⁶¹ Even before WSI 231 was issued, internal memos indicated that BBC recruiters felt the Corporation was not eager to hire part-time staff.¹⁶² This was not universal across departments, but enthusiasm seemed limited to the General Office, and the Catering Department.¹⁶³ The largest number of part-time women at the BBC were

¹⁵⁶ Garratt, interview.

¹⁵⁷ Memo, 20-Nov-43, AppO to ADSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁵⁸ Christopher Smith, *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park: A Social and Organisational History, 1939-1945* (Basingstoke, Hampshire Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), 55-57, 66.

¹⁵⁹ Memo, 14-Aug-42, from Allport (incomplete), "Staff Policy, Part-Time Staff," (BBC WAC R49/479/1, 1942-1946).

¹⁶⁰ Crowley, "Women Workers in the General Post Office," 273-277, 287-288, 301-203, 313-214.

¹⁶¹ Memo, 13-Apr-43, AppO to ADSA, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁶² Memo, 28-Apr-42, WSO (Birmingham) to WEO; WSI-198, 30-Sep-42; Memo, 13-Feb-43, RO(C) to AppO, "Staff Policy, Part-Time Staff."

¹⁶³ Memo, 4-May-42, Beardshaw to AWE0, *ibid*.

charwomen, who were normally employed on a part-time basis. London Office Manager Joan Vickery was a lone voice who cheerfully advocated the use of part-time staff, citing her own success in their use.¹⁶⁴ The Clerical Recruitment Officer, Dorothy Tomlinson, referred to this enthusiasm as a “drug”, suggesting that the use of part-time staff in the General Office had solved problems for that department, but was of limited value to other departments.¹⁶⁵

As an example of BBC reluctance, Transfer Officer (Clerical) Florence M. Perry was tasked in April 1943 to sell the idea of using part-time staff to fill vacant positions.¹⁶⁶ Whether it was an example of her poor sales skills, or a manifestation of BBC reluctance, Perry failed in her mission. Of the ten posts detailed in her report, none was deemed suitable for part-time staff. Although the reasons varied, the main worries appeared to be consistency and confusion. When contemplating dividing a full-time position into two parts, the departments wanted to be assured that a guaranteed pair of individuals would fulfil the roles. Another related concern was that the splitting of duties would create confusion within the department, as the secretary or clerk might be working for a group of people (Table 3.1).¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Memo, 11-Mar-43, EO (London Area) to AppO; Interview, 12-Apr-43, AO, TO(C) and LOM, *ibid.* During the war the General Office at Broadcasting House was designated the London Area Office as there were other General Offices in evacuated areas.

¹⁶⁵ Memo, 22-Dec-42, RO(C) to AppO, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁶ Interview, 12-Apr-43, AppO, TO(C) & LOM, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁷ Memo, 4-May-43, TO(C) to AppO, *ibid.*

TABLE 3.1: ATTEMPTS TO PLACE PART-TIME STAFF, APRIL 1943

Position	Reason for Not Using Part-Time Staff
Shorthand/Typist, Studio Bookings	Felt two staff working on studio bookings would cause confusion, and no staff available to supervise to prevent mistakes.
Secretary to Miss S. Von der Heyde	Not deemed desirable as Von der Heyde was employed on confidential personnel matters.
Shorthand/Typist EEO	Lone worker on sensitive personnel matters.
Planning Clerk and Clerk/Secretary	These were senior posts in the Overseas Services Division and seen as suitable for promotion as no sufficiently senior people available on part-time basis.
Secretary to Mr Gough, Overseas Services Division	Filled by staff member who was redundant in current post.
Secretary to Mr Bryson, Overseas Services Division	Filled by staff member who was redundant in current post.
Shorthand/Typist in Catering	Filled by a full-time junior from the General Office.
News Typist, Empire News	Filled by transfer of staff.
Secretary, Radio News Reel	Job required working for six assistants and deemed too confusing for part-time workers.

One of the other major problems the BBC struggled with in using part-time staff was agreeing on how to fairly compensate those on hourly pay, and how to divide the work schedule. Payment for part-time staff was worked out in a complicated formula intended to compensate part-timers for having to bear the full burden of transportation costs. This was comparable to the concerns raised at the GPO by the UPW noted above. To this end the rate was calculated as a fraction of the wage scale with an additional ten percent added to the hourly rate.¹⁶⁸ The resulting wage had the potential to provide the equivalent of a full-time wage at only thirty-eight hours per week, ten hours less than a full-time worker.¹⁶⁹ The original formula established in the spring of 1942 underwent a complicated negotiation for revision that took over a year to resolve.¹⁷⁰ All of the effort seemed to have resulted in very small returns. By the end of March 1944, the BBC only had 161 part-time staff, outside of charwomen. The largest numbers were in the London Area where the General Office Staff were located, thirty-four, including sixteen in catering, and an additional twenty-three in Catering outside of London. The Overseas Services Division and the European Services

¹⁶⁸ Memo, 25-Mar-42, AWEO to WSO West Region, *ibid*.

¹⁶⁹ Memo, 8-Sep-43, EEO to ADSA, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁰ Memo, 24-Nov-42, AppO to Sec, EC; WSI-270, 14-Dec-43, *ibid*.

Division also had twenty-seven and thirty part-timers, respectively. Twenty-three out of the thirty in the European Services Division were men with language qualifications (Table 3.2).¹⁷¹

TABLE 3.2: BBC PART-TIME STAFF, 1944

Area or Division	Part-Time Staff
London Area	18
London Area Catering	16
Catering Outside London	23
Overseas Services Division	27
European Services Division	30 (23 male linguists)

In a perverse turn, the Staff Administration Department was also working hard to limit the wages paid to the BBCs largest cadre of part-time staff, charwomen, who were not included in the official calculations of part-time staff. In late 1943, the Assistant Director of Staff Administration, Patrick E. Cruttwell, along with his colleague, L. Macrae, began pushing to reverse a decade-old policy of paying charwomen time-and-a-half if they worked over fifteen hours in the week.¹⁷² The policy had only become controversial as the tight labour market had caused a shortage in available charwomen at a time when the cleaning regimen had greatly expanded, exploding the cleaning budget. Cruttwell further suggested that full-time staff be hired to reduce the number of charwomen.¹⁷³ Although agreeing in principle with Cruttwell that overtime should only be offered to those working over forty-eight hours per week, the London Area Manager lobbied on behalf of the charwomen, not wanting to revoke the policy at such a crucial time.¹⁷⁴ The charwomen were on such low wages that time-and-a-half only added an additional seven pence to their hourly wage of one shilling and three pence.¹⁷⁵

THE SECRETARIAL TRAINING CENTRE

The BBC had first established a Staff Training School in 1936, largely to train staff on BBC administrative methods and production techniques which were unavailable from outside sources. The Staff Training School was discontinued in 1939, and revived in June 1941. The former Chief Instructor, E.A.F. Harding, was named head upon its revival. The Staff Training School not only helped the BBC maintain its vaunted quality, it also served as a mechanism to assist with recruitment. Potential staff could be trained in BBC methods, and

¹⁷¹ Chart, 7-Apr-44; 11-Apr-44, *ibid*.

¹⁷² Memo, 26-Oct-43, ALAD to LAD, *ibid*.

¹⁷³ Memo, 1-Nov-43, ADSA to LAD, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁴ Memo, 28-Oct-43, LAD to ADSA, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁵ Memo, 26-Oct-43, ALAD to LAD, *ibid*. A normal weekly rate worked at fifteen hours per week was 18 shillings and 9 pence.

held in a training reserve before positions became available for them to fill. It offered specialist courses in radio production methods, and both Nesta Pain and Jenifer Wayne went through the Staff Training School before being transferred into F&D.¹⁷⁶ Another F&D employee, Stella Hillier, was transferred to the Training Reserve when she was in danger of becoming redundant in 1943.¹⁷⁷ Asa Briggs pointed out that the training programme helped the BBC retain the services of noted male staff Louis MacNeice, Marius Goring and Leslie Perowne.¹⁷⁸

Secretarial and engineering training were not included in the curriculum of the Staff Training School as both clerical staff and engineering staff were expected to have prior training and experience before entering BBC service.¹⁷⁹ Secretarial training schools and engineering college courses were readily available outside the organisation and the BBC had no reason to offer basic skills for prospective employees. While wartime recruitment conditions would lead the Engineering Division to offer some level of basic skills, both clerical and engineering staff still needed to have a good educational foundation before joining the BBC. Clerical staff were expected to already have typing and shorthand skills. Although Briggs also refers to the separate Engineering Training School that emerged during the war, he does not mention another BBC training programme launched in 1942, the Secretarial Training Centre. The Engineering Training School will be discussed further in Chapter Five (see page 128).

As the BBC clearly preferred the security of full-time clerical staff, the organisation sought ways both to improve the quality of available staff and to find the most promising candidates in the available pool. The Secretarial Training Centre was one way for the Corporation to achieve that goal. Newly hired staff were put through the programme either before starting new positions, or as soon as possible after their start date, as part of an orientation to BBC systems. Wartime staff who had joined before 1942 were also offered the opportunity to take courses as well, particularly to improve typing and shorthand speeds. The stress was on sending any promising staff who the Women Staff Officers and the Administrative Assistants thought would benefit most from the course. She urged them to “. . . [c]hose your best and make it a privilege to be chosen.”¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ Memo, 30-Aug-41, DST to DDSA, "Left Staff, Wayne, Jenifer."; Report, 5-Mar-42, DST "Left Staff, Pain, Florence Nesta Kathleen".

¹⁷⁷ Memo, 13-Nov-44, OSEO to Hillier, "Left Staff, Hillier, Stella Wedderburn Ogilvie, File 1," (BBC WAC L1/1388/1, 1938).

¹⁷⁸ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 547-548.

¹⁷⁹ Graves, "B.B.C. Jobs," 7.

¹⁸⁰ Memo, 9-Mar-42, WEO to WSOs & AAs (quote); 17-Mar-42, WEO to C(A), "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Secretarial Training Centre," (BBC WAC R49/722, 1942-1954).

The training courses provided secretarial training alongside a basic understanding of broadcasting principles and knowledge of the BBC broadcasting streams. This was what Gladys Burlton intended when she formulated her ideas regarding the Training Centre. She described the two types of training, technical and corporate, that would be emphasized in the Secretarial Training Centre in a March 1942 memo. Burlton based the curriculum and structure on a Typists' School she had set up while working in the Censorship Department at the Treasury. Technical training taught basic secretarial skills and corporate training BBC methods and systems.¹⁸¹ Corporate skills covered the BBC organisational structure from the General Office to the Programme Administration to the Regions and Areas to the reference libraries. Operational rules and regulations including, conditions of service, staff regulations, and the welfare and social facilities were also covered in lectures. Attendees learned the programme chain in a lecture called "Microphone to Loud Speaker," and were briefed on the Overseas and European Broadcasting Divisions, including technical information on shortwave, mediumwave and longwave transmission. Technical skills included shorthand and typing practice, but also an emphasis on phone manner, personality and secretarial work, and six lectures on standard office practice.¹⁸²

Lady Margaret D'Arcy was the first Principal of The Secretarial Training Centre, with the first cohort attending a two-week course in Portland Place in February 1942.¹⁸³ The course was designed as a two-week session for trainees, with recruits needing a refresher course attending a week-long session.¹⁸⁴ The first classes were limited to fifteen, but eventually could accommodate up to thirty.¹⁸⁵ Take-up rates for the sessions varied throughout the war years. In April 1943, the number attending the secretarial course had dipped steadily from the optimal high of thirty to a low of ten.¹⁸⁶ By June 1943, the average number was a steady twelve to sixteen, but recruiters still lamented that the quality of students was low.¹⁸⁷ However, the results must have been ultimately satisfactory, as by the time the sixty-sixth course was run in January 1945, the syllabus had been expanded and the course ran a full three weeks.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Memo, 13-Jan-43, DST to EOs; 21-Nov-44, HSTS to DOPS, *ibid*.

¹⁸³ Memo, 9-Mar-42, WEO to WSOs & AAs *ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ Memo, 19-May-42, DPA to Department Heads, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁵ Memo, 17-Apr-43, Hart to AppO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid*.

¹⁸⁷ Memo, 4-Jun-43, Read to AppO, *ibid*.

¹⁸⁸ Lecture Syllabus, undated, "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Secretarial Training Centre."

CONCLUSIONS

Although the BBC had completed extensive planning in the event of an increasingly likely conflict, the Second World War brought unforeseen challenges to BBC recruitment. These challenges in some cases were due to the unexpected expansion of broadcasting but were also the result of the Corporation's unwillingness to alter its entrenched procedures. Pre-war planning had been predicated on the assumption of a contraction of broadcasting, and the Corporation had willingly released seemingly redundant employees for government work and war-related service. Within months of the outbreak of war the BBC realised its mistake, and many of these staff members were recalled for BBC service. Adding to this miscalculation was a reluctance to consider using women to replace men, especially in administrative functions. When the Corporation finally accepted the changed labour market conditions, they found themselves in competition with powerful adversaries, the Civil Service and the military. Additionally, new restrictions on hiring women had been put in place in the interim through the National Service (Number 2) Act in 1941, and the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order of 1942.

The solution to recruitment problems preferred by the MOLNS, the hiring of part-time staff, did not fit with the BBC's organisational preferences. Although the senior managers and recruitment staff tried to encourage greater use of part-time staff, the BBC departments generally rejected the use of part-time staff. Unlike manufacturing or even the GC&CS, the BBC was unable to solve administration and programme output through mechanised options. Instead, secretarial responsibilities seem to have tacitly increased. As indicated above, the role of secretary, clerk or shorthand typist, which already included heavier responsibilities in the pre-war era, assumed a larger administrative role in the departments, and the security and consistency of a full-time staff member was demanded. One adaptation that emphasised this greater responsibility was the establishment of the Secretarial Training Centre. This Centre not only prepared the most able recruits for service in the secretarial ranks, but also provided attendees with a through overview of the BBC's organisational structure and programme output. Therefore, the BBC solved recruitment problems by maintaining a solid base of clerical staff who then assumed greater management responsibilities within the organisation.

Chapter Four ENGINEERING'S FIGHT FOR STAFF

Although the growing numbers of people employed by the BBC, and the evacuation of BBC departments outside of London during the Second World War, increased compartmentalisation in administration, in many ways the BBC had always been a divided organisation. Regional broadcasting centres mirrored the organisation in London with local versions of children's programming, talks, and orchestras creating their own hubs of programming, but also retaining a regional independence. The Engineering Division straddled both the national and regional divide and had from the earliest days wielded a degree of autonomy. On the eve of the war, Engineering accounted for a third of all BBC employees, 1,635 out of 4,889.¹ In contrast with the rest of the Corporation, the Engineering Division was overwhelmingly an all-male domain. The call-up of men into military service inevitably affected staff numbers and recruitment into this Division. In order to maintain functionality of the broadcasting service, the Engineering Division resorted to hiring women technicians for the first time. Although the inclusion of women in the Engineering Division was not necessarily welcomed by the Division, over the course of the war women were allowed to work in a larger number of areas and received an increasing amount of training. This contrasted with other industries employing women for the first time during the war years.

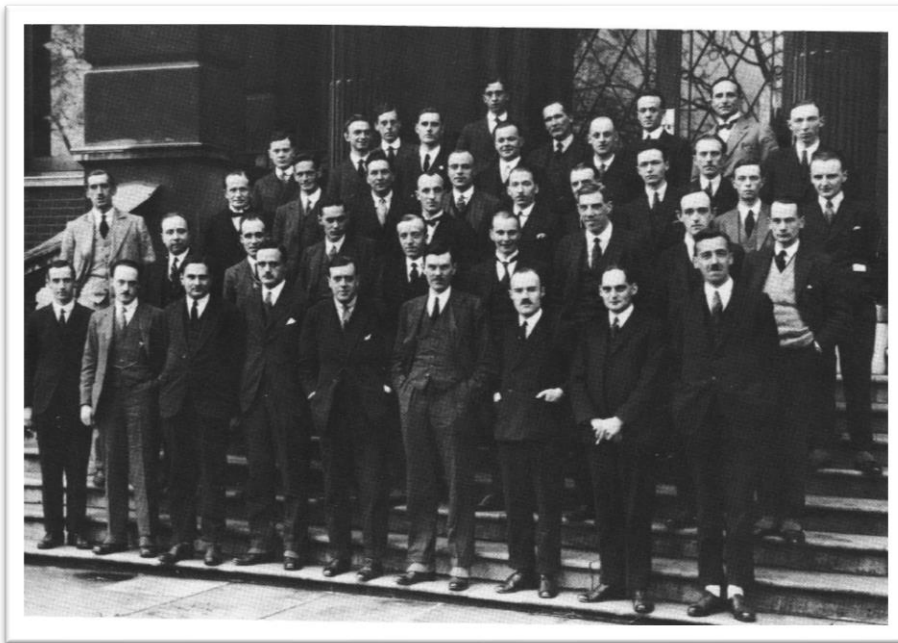
This chapter will explore the limitations placed on the Engineering Division, and the strategies that were used to recruit replacements for departing male engineering staff. As with the administrative arm of the BBC, the Engineering Division pursued all available male staff, liaised with the MOLNS, and developed a policy of recruitment for utilizing womanpower. However, despite similar strategies being employed by Engineering and Administration, the outcome of the Engineering Division's efforts varied from that of the Administration side. These variations were highlighted by the different recruitment goals, and the Division's relationship with both the MOLNS and the MOI. After discussing the establishment of the Engineering Division and its structure at the beginning of the war, this chapter will outline the challenges presented by the conscription and reservation for military service on this all-male division that lead to the Division's decision to recruit female technicians. The sometimes fractious relationship with government ministries will also be highlighted. The training regimen and the ways in which the Engineering Division employed women will be discussed in Chapter Five.

¹ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 18 & 58.

BACKGROUND INTO THE ENGINEERING DIVISION

The independence of the Engineering Division was established in the early days of the organisation. The first Controller of Engineering was Peter Eckersley, whose experience with broadcasting began in 1921 with the experimental Marconi station 2MT in Writtle, Essex, and who joined the BBC in early 1923.² Eckersley established his own power base within the organisation which rivalled that of Director-General John Reith. Eckersley's vision for the BBC differed from that of Reith in that it did not exclude commercial broadcasting, making Eckersley both a rival and a potential successor to Reith.³ Although Eckersley was dismissed in 1929, reportedly due to a divorce action, the independence of the Engineering Division was not diminished by Eckersley's departure.⁴ The majority of the management-level engineers who would guide the Division through the war years had either worked with Eckersley before at the experimental station 2MT or had been hired by Eckersley and had been with the organisation from its earliest days.⁵

FIGURE 4.1 BBC ENGINEERS AT AN IEE CONFERENCE IN 1926



Front Row (from left): Harold Bishop (4th), Peter Eckersley (5th), Peter Florence (7th)
Second Row (from left): Leslie Hotine (4th -behind Eckersley)
Third Row (from left): R.H. Humphreys (5th), Edward G. Chadder (7th)

² Eckersley was hired in 1923. Cecil Lewis, *Broadcasting from Within* (London: Newnes, 1924), 9.

³ Asa Briggs and Anita McConnell (rev), "Eckersley, Peter Pendleton," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and David Cannadine (online) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Noel Ashbridge, and W.R.T.B. Wynn had been part of the original team 2MT in Writtle, Essex, and joined the BBC in 1926. Harold Bishop, Edward G. Chadder, Peter A. Florence, Leslie Hotine and Martin J.L. Pulling were hired in the 1920s. T.B. McCrerrick and Anita McConnell (rev), "Ashbridge, Sir Noel (1889-1975)," *ibid.*

Although clearly a male-dominated field, women working in engineering were not completely unknown in early twentieth-century Britain. Phoebe Sarah Marks, better known as Hertha Ayrton, was elected the first female member of the Institution of Electrical Engineers in 1899.⁶ During the 1920s, Caroline Haslett was also a well-known engineer who like Ayrton focused on domestic use of electricity. Haslett founded the Electrical Association for Women in 1924. She served as the editor of the Association's magazine *Electrical Age* and was also the editor of *Woman Engineer* while she served as secretary to the Women's Engineering Society. The Women's Engineering Society was founded in 1919 by Lady Katharine Parsons, the wife of noted engineer Sir Charles Parsons and mother of engineer Rachel Parsons.⁷ Haslett was a familiar figure at the BBC. She had been in contact with the BBC Talks Department since 1932, and began broadcasting short talks in 1934.⁸ During the war she was not only a frequent contributor, but she was also consulted in her capacity as Advisor of the Ministry of Labour on Women's Training.⁹ In the post-war era, she continued to appear as a guest on BBC radio programmes and on BBC television.¹⁰ Haslett also was consulted in 1941 when the Corporation was searching for a replacement for Gweneth Freeman.¹¹

Throughout the early twentieth century the number of women who trained as engineers was low. During the First World War Loughborough College trained women working in skilled engineering jobs in munitions factories. However, in the interwar era, many colleges and universities barred women from studying engineering. In 1934, 200 women self-identified as working in the field of engineering, increased from less than fifty the previous year.¹² Nina Baker noted in her study on Scottish Universities that women who were interested in science were more likely to study medicine than engineering, which she attributed to employability concerns.¹³ Carol Dyhouse's research has produced similar results. In her survey of women who attended English universities in the 1930s, only one woman studied engineering. Eleven percent studied mathematics (55 out of 504) and

⁶ Justin Pollard, "The Eccentric Engineer," *Engineering & Technology* 11, no. 6 (2016): 88.

⁷ Citrine Symons and Eleanor Putnam (Rev), "Haslett, Dame Caroline Harriet," in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, ed. H.C.G. Matthew, Brian Harrison, and David Cannadine (Online) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

⁸ Letter, 12-Aug-32, Haslett to Somerville; 16-Oct-34, Haslett to Wace, "Contributor File: Haslett, Caroline," (BBC WAC 1932-1948).

⁹ Press Release, 30-Sep-40, The Women's Engineering Society, *ibid*.

¹⁰ "BBC Genome: Radio Times 1923-2009".

¹¹ List, 12-Sep-41, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 1."

¹² Carroll Pursell, "Am I a Lady or an Engineer?" The Origins of the Women's Engineering Society in Britain, 1918-1940," in *Crossing Boundaries, Building Bridges: Comparing the History of Women Engineers 1970s-1990s*, ed. Annie Canel, Ruth Oldenziel, and Karin Zachmann, Studies in the History of Science, Technology and Medicine (Amsterdam: Harwood Academic Publishers, 2000), 65-70.

¹³ Nina Baker, "Early Women Engineering Graduates from Scottish Universities," in *4th European Conference on Gender Equality in Higher Education* (2005), 3.

nineteen percent studied natural sciences (96 out of 504).¹⁴ In a separate study, Dyhouse indicated that prior to the First World War educational policy had encouraged girls to pursue domestic subjects in place of scientific ones. Additionally, Dyhouse stated that in the inter-war years girls in education had the same hours of attendance as boys, but policy discussions suggested that overexertion on educational pursuits could harm girls' reproductive health.¹⁵ The strategies used by the BBC Engineering Division to overcome these educational limitations will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five.

The BBC had never hired a woman for any of its engineering posts, not even operational posts where physical strength was not deemed a qualifying factor. In contrast, the switchboard, or PBX Department of the BBC was staffed almost exclusively by women.¹⁶ The operation of a switchboard was similar enough to some control room duties that when women were first being considered for Engineering jobs in 1940 the suggestion was made that "PBX operatory type" girls would be best for the operational roles.¹⁷ On the eve of the war, women were only hired for clerical roles within the Engineering Division, and were even excluded from these roles in some cases. The Equipment Department, the Research Department, and all of the transmitters hired only men as secretaries, short-hand typists, telephone operators, and cleaners.¹⁸

As Kate Murphy has demonstrated in her work on the inter-war era, the BBC was a progressive employer, and hired women in non-clerical and responsible roles in other areas of the Corporation.¹⁹ The exact reasons why the Engineering Division did not follow a similar course is not explicitly stated in the records. There are several factors that were quoted during the war years that may have formed part of this rationale, including requirements of physical strength, working in isolated areas, and the lack of amenities in certain transmitting stations.²⁰ This does not explain why women were not used in studio settings or control rooms where none of these limitations existed. Another possible factor could be the low numbers of women qualified for engineering jobs. Given that many early radio enthusiasts and researchers were former military personnel, there could have been a perceived lack of interest and expertise on the part of women. Whatever the intersection

¹⁴ Carol Dyhouse, "Family Patterns of Social Mobility through Higher Education in England in the 1930s," *Journal of Social History*, no. 4 (2001): 825.

¹⁵ Carol Dyhouse, "Towards a 'Feminine' Curriculum for English Schoolgirls: The Demands of Ideology 1870–1963," *Women's Studies International Quarterly* 1 (1978): 304–307.

¹⁶ "BBC Staff List," 32. The list of staff included one man who an evening AP.

¹⁷ Questions for EEO, c. Sep-40, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators." It is unclear who wrote the list, but is likely to have been the head of the Operation and Maintenance Department, R.B.T. Wynn.

¹⁸ "BBC Staff List," 61–106.

¹⁹ Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 65–68.

²⁰ Memo, 23-Sep-41, SE(T) to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

of the above factors, it is clear from its early days that the BBC Engineering Division had been designated as an occupation specifically gendered for men, a designation that was also common in the wider field of engineering. In her book on the development of modern American office culture, Sharon Hartman Strom identified engineering as one of the professions from which an almost exclusively male business-managerial elite was formed.²¹

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Personal characteristics or beliefs of individuals may seem peripheral to the functioning of large organisations, but individuals can often have an impact on the implementation of policy. As Penny Summerfield notes in *Women Workers in the Second World War: Production, Patriarchy and Conflict*, MOLNS official Ruth Smieton, along with a colleague at the Ministry of Health, Zöe Puxley, shaped public policy towards the provision of child care, often having more influence on policy than the Minister of Labour Ernest Bevin.²² The Engineering Division also demonstrated how individuals in the Division shaped decisions on how and when to recruit women for technical roles. The Controller of Engineering, Noel Ashbridge, opposed hiring women, while the Board of Governors and some of the managers under him thought that women should be utilized. As indicated in Chapter Three, Recruitment Director William Kenny had noted this hesitancy to consider female staff for some roles. Before discussing the shifts in policy, this section will describe the structure of the Engineering Division and highlight a few of the individuals involved in developing policy and hiring women in the various departments that made up the Engineering Division.

At the beginning of the war, the Engineering Division consisted of seven separate departments. These were classified into two broad categories, the Specialist Departments and Operations & Maintenance (O&M). The Specialist Departments included the Civil Engineer and Building Maintenance, Equipment, Lines, Overseas and Engineering Information, Research, and Station Design and Installation.²³ The O&M was by far the largest department in the Engineering Division. More than eighty percent of all BBC engineers were part of O&M in 1939 – 858 out of 1060.²⁴ O&M included all studios and transmitters, including regional studios and transmitters, as well as the London Control Room, the Outside Broadcasts Section, the Technical Recording Section, the Education Engineers Section, and the London Television Station at Alexandra Palace.²⁵ The Television

²¹ Strom, *Beyond the Typewriter*, 4-7.

²² Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 67-68.

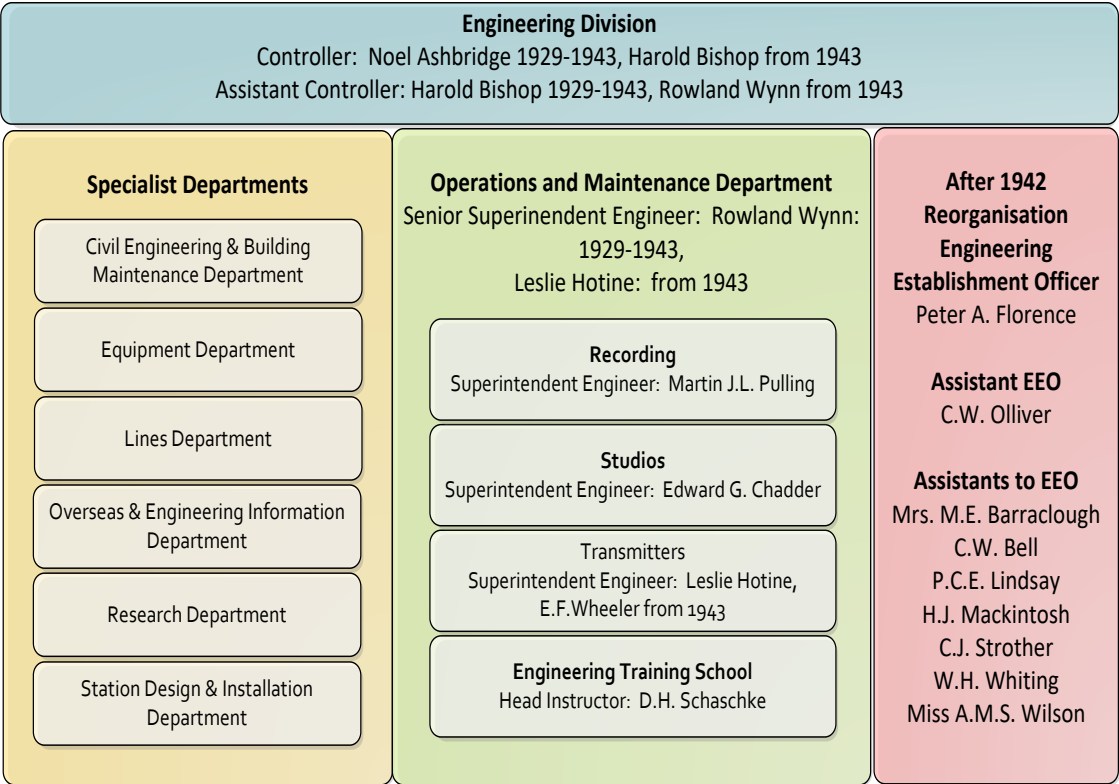
²³ "BBC Staff List," 62-75.

²⁴ Memo, 18-May-42, EEO to C(E), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b," (BBC WAC R49/194/4, 1942-1945). In this memo the total Engineering Division staff numbers were listed as 1,619. Of this number, one-hundred-one were clerical staff, and four-hundred-fifty-eight were manual staff.

²⁵ "BBC Staff List," 76-106.

Service was shuttered for the duration of the war, and its engineers redeployed or placed in Category C.²⁶

FIGURE 4.2: ENGINEERING DEPARTMENT STRUCTURE



During the war, Noel Ashbridge and Harold Bishop both served as Controllers of Engineering. The two men had started their engineering careers with Marconi. Ashbridge had worked with his predecessor, Peter Eckersley, at the experimental station 2MT, while Bishop had worked at 2LO in London. Both Ashbridge and Eckersley had served in the First World War. Bishop was more than decade younger than either Ashbridge and Eckersley, had not enlisted, and after studying at the University of London, had first entered the Civil Service before starting work for Marconi. Bishop joined the BBC in 1923.²⁷ Directly under Bishop in the Engineering hierarchy was Rowland Wynn, who had also worked for Marconi with Eckersley and Ashbridge at 2MT. Wynn, who had also served in

²⁶ *The BBC Handbook 1940*, 53-58; Norman Tomalin, *Daventry Calling the World* (Whitby: Caedom of Whitby Publishers, 1998), 60. .
²⁷ Anne Pimlott Baker, "Bishop, Sir Harold (1900-1983), Broadcasting Engineer," (Oxford University Press, 2004).

the Royal Air Force with Eckersley and had attended the University of Cambridge after the war, joined the BBC in 1926, the same year as Ashbridge.²⁸

As will be detailed further below, during the first two years of war Ashbridge had been opposed to employing women. Bishop and Wynn appeared more ambivalent about the prospect. At one point during the war Wynn even noted that he would have preferred the continuity of using women as Technical Assistants, rather than young men below conscription age.²⁹ Bishop's sentiments are harder to discern from the files, but he did not seem to express any opposition to the proposal. The three Superintendent Engineers in the O&M Department were Edward Chadder (Studios), Martin Pulling (Recording), and Leslie Hotine (Transmitters). The EiCs were the next layer of management below the Superintendent Engineers. As will be discussed in Chapter Five, Recording and Studios would prove to be the more welcoming to female staff members.

The EEO and his staff played a pivotal role in recruitment issues, and subsequently the promotion of women technicians in the Engineering Division. The EEO, Peter Florence, was an engineer by training and had joined the BBC in June 1923 as a Senior Maintenance Engineer.³⁰ The son of a draper, Florence was born in Lewisham, to which his father had moved from Scotland in the 1880s.³¹ Florence attended the prestigious Alleyn's School and the associated Dulwich College as a scholarship student, at the same time as Harold Bishop.³² Florence was ambitious, but because he lacked university training he probably felt at a disadvantage to the other university-educated members of the Engineering Division.³³ After having reached the level of Senior Superintendent Engineer, Florence assumed the role of Engineering Establishment Officer in 1936, effectively leaving the Engineering Division. The 1942 re-organisation moved the post of EEO into the Engineering Division, an event that Florence saw as an unwelcome change.³⁴ He remained in this role until 1951 when he was promoted to Head of London Area.³⁵

In his annual reviews, Florence's supervisors consistently noted that he was an efficient, hard-working administrator who was reluctant to delegate, and someone who was

²⁸ Staff Record, 19-Apr-26, "Left Staff, Wynn, Rowland Tempest Beresford," (BBC WAC L2/238/1, 1926); Tim Wander, *2MT Whistle: The Birth of British Broadcasting* (Gamlingay, Bedfordshire: Authors Online Ltd, 2010), 70.

²⁹ "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants," (BBC WAC R13/73, 1942-1944).

³⁰ Letter, 9-Jun-23, CE to Florence, "Left Staff, Florence, Peter Alec," (BBC WAC L1/2321/1, 1923).

³¹ "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1911."; "Census Returns of England and Wales, 1891," (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives of the UK, 1891).

³² Application, 21-Oct-24, "Left Staff, Florence, Peter Alec."

³³ Annual Review, Mar-34; Mar-35; Interview, 22-Jun-37; 19-Mar-40, *ibid.*

³⁴ Memo, 1-Jun-42, Florence to Pym, *ibid.*

³⁵ Memo, 1-Nov-50, DA to Distribution B, *ibid.*

willing to question his superiors.³⁶ Although his counterpart on the Administration side, Douglas Clarke, faced some of the same staffing issues during the war, Clarke received fainter praise.³⁷ Clarke was more deferential to those above him, and more concerned about possible breaches of etiquette.³⁸ These differences in their personalities may have accounted for the Engineering Division's more successful negotiations with the MOLNS. Although Florence may have had an easier time making his case for engineering jobs, as the MOLNS seemed to regard clerical jobs as non-essential, his personality and persistence probably also helped the Engineering achieve better results.

Less information can be gleaned from the files regarding Florence's two female assistants, Miss A.M.S. Wilson and Mrs. M.E. Barraclough. Florence hired Wilson in 1941 as the Engineering Women Establishment Officer to help manage the new female technical staff.³⁹ Florence had determined that in order to be an effective administrator, Wilson would have to have similar experiences as the female technicians. This included going through the same training courses as women technicians and conducting site visits to gain insight into the women technicians' experiences.⁴⁰ Her post required her to handle recruitment and general administration of the female staff, and included traveling to the regional studio centres and the transmitters, coordinating training and placement, and liaising with the MOLNS.⁴¹ Barraclough began working for the EEO in September 1942 and was much more active in dealing with the female clerical staff in the Engineering Division, questions of conscription, and general administrative duties.⁴²

BEGINNING OF WAR

Like all areas of the BBC, the Engineering Division anticipated that the war would mean a reduced need for engineering staff. The London Television Station at Alexandra Palace was closed down entirely, leaving many technicians and engineers without a position. Some of them joined the Air Ministry, and others were redeployed within the organisation. As discussed in previous chapters, BBC staff that were non-essential were Category C and many served in other government departments.⁴³ When it became apparent that the BBC would be expanding rather than contracting, the Corporation quickly requested the return

³⁶ Interview, 20-Jan-44, Florence and Bishop, *ibid*.

³⁷ "Left Staff, Clarke, Douglas Hardcastle," *passim*, see especially Annual Reviews.

³⁸ Letter, 1-Apr-26, Clarke to Reith, *ibid*.

³⁹ Memo, 19-Aug-41, EEO to AWSS, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁴⁰ Memo, 10-Jul-41, EEO to EiCs, *ibid*.

⁴¹ 30-Sep-41, EWEO to WSS Belfast; 1-Dec-41, EWEO to EiC London; 12-May-42, EWEA to EiC Droitwich, *ibid*.

⁴² Memo, 22-Sep-40, Barraclough to WarSO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 2."

⁴³ Letter, 1-Apr-39, Harvey to Macrae; 6-Oct-39, EEO to Ministry of Supplies, "Staff Policy, Secondment of Staff and Category C, Oct 1939-1941, File 1b," (BBC WAC R49/613/2, 1939). The October letter is offering the services of manual or industrial staff, but also mentions draughtsmen, tracers, clerical assistants, male shorthand typists, and Programme Engineers.

of many Category C Staff. However, Engineering continued to release senior engineers to the Admiralty for special duties.⁴⁴ Unlike the other Divisions in the BBC, Engineering realised that although they desperately needed these experienced engineers to return, the government would not only refuse the request but also look in askance at the BBC for requesting their return.⁴⁵

The Engineering Division was also burdened by the fact that a significant number of their male staff members were of draft age. Additionally, radio engineers were also in demand with the armed services and the Merchant Navy. Two-hundred-twenty BBC engineers were called-up in the early months of the war – nearly fifteen percent of all engineering staff.⁴⁶ By February 1942 this number had increased to 413.⁴⁷ Although Engineering would be able to retain a large proportion of the remaining technical staff, the continuing tightening of call-up and reservation ages made recruitment of replacement staff particularly difficult. The restrictions affected recruitment practices and training regimens and would lead to the utilisation of womanpower in operational roles.

As with the Administration Division discussed in Chapter Three, the expansion of programming in 1940 created a greater demand for staff in the Engineering Division. In the Corporation's first contacts with the MOLNS in May 1939, the BBC had only anticipated needing language specialists for newscasts and for the Monitoring Service –specifically ruling out the need for additional administrative and engineering staff.⁴⁸ However once the war started, the nation grew restless with a single Home Service, with complaints surfacing within a matter of weeks. This dissatisfaction was amplified by the loss of some English-language commercial stations that originated on the Continent. Radio Luxembourg closed in September 1939, and Radio Normandie also ceased broadcasting in 1939. Radio Normandie would only briefly restart as a the lower-powered station Radio Fécamp.⁴⁹

In response, the BBC quickly added an alternative to the Home Service, the Forces Programme in January 1940.⁵⁰ As part of the war effort, the Overseas Services Division – which prior to the war included the Empire Service and its associated language

⁴⁴ Letter, 11-Jul-40, AC(E) to Admiralty, *ibid.* The first staff to be recalled were clerical, advertising staff and programme staff. The Administrative Division began recalling administrators in late 1941.

⁴⁵ Memo, 26-Feb-42, EEO to DDSA, "Staff Policy, Secondment of Staff and Category C, Oct 1942-1945, File 2," (BBC WAC R49/613/3, 1942).

⁴⁶ Letter, 11-Jul-40, AC(E) to Admiralty, "Staff Policy, Secondment of Staff and Category C, Oct 1939-1941, File 1b."

⁴⁷ Letter, 11-Jul-40, AC(E) to Admiralty, *ibid.*; Memo, 13-Feb-42, EEO to DSA's Secretary, "Staff Policy, Secondment of Staff and Category C, Oct 1942-1945, File 2."

⁴⁸ Minute Sheet, 20-May-39, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

⁴⁹ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 115-116, 118.

⁵⁰ *The BBC Handbook 1942*, 27; Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 114-128.

programming – was expanded to broadcast to the British colonies and to occupied countries on the Continent. Both the Forces Programme and the expanding overseas broadcasting drove a need for more engineering staff and facilities.⁵¹ However, it was the international programming, rather than the alternative Forces Programme, that required more studios and transmitters, which would in turn cause greater strain on the resources of the Engineering Division.⁵²

RESERVATION OF STAFF

[Controller of Engineering] did not regard the use of young recruits to the Engineering staff for the limited period between their joining and being called up as being satisfactory, having regard to the very heavy demands that are likely to be made on us in the future, nor did he think that the employment of women and of such older men as might be available would meet the situation.⁵³

With the expansion of radio programming came the increased need for Engineering staff. However, wartime conditions resulted in limitations on recruitment. By far the biggest obstacle for recruitment and retention of personnel was the Schedule of Reserved Occupations which came into effect in September 1939. First conceived in the inter-war years, the Schedule of Reserved Occupations was devised to prevent the loss of skilled workers into unskilled posts in the military. The loss of experienced workers in all fields had proved problematic during the First World War, and the new measures were devised to prevent this same drain on productivity.⁵⁴ The demands of the Forces meant that whole classes of potential employees were unobtainable for BBC purposes, and made hiring replacements difficult. Competition for scarce staff between in government departments and private enterprise could be fierce. The GPO and merchant navy were direct competitors with the BBC for any available radio engineers. The BBC often sought to retain or hire men, and later women, who had been declared medically unfit for the services. There were 105 medically unfit men under the age of thirty in the Engineering Division in 1943. In contrast there were only twenty-two in the non-Engineering side of the Corporation.⁵⁵ The Schedule set out the ages and employment categories under which men were required to serve in

⁵¹ The BBC initially called the new service the Programme for the Forces, and the nomenclature Forces Programme only stabilised in 1943. The Overseas Services Division would launch a diverse array of networks that they referred to by colour designations. The Blue Network broadcast to Western Europe and Central Mediterranean, the Yellow to Latin American, as well as Spain, Portugal, Scandinavia and the Balkans, the Red to British colonies and the Dominions, and the Green to the Near East, India and South Africa. *The BBC Handbook 1942*, 9-27.

⁵² Edward Lewis Ellman Pawley, *BBC Engineering, 1922-1972* (London: British Broadcasting Corporation, 1972), 253-270.

⁵³ Memo, 16-Nov-40, AC(A) to DSA, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a," (BBC WAC R49/194/1, 1940).

⁵⁴ Alison Chand, "Conflicting Masculinities? Men in Reserved Occupations in Clydeside 1939-45," *Journal of Scottish Historical Studies* 34, no. 2 (2014): 222-224.

⁵⁵ Memo, 18-Feb-43, Director, Secretariat to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

the armed services, or in war related industries. These ages would continually alter throughout the course of the war.

Initially the conscription age, or the lowest age that men were subject to call-up orders, was twenty. This meant that all male BBC staff members were liable to join the services after their twentieth birthday. Male employees over the age of twenty could be retained by the BBC through a system of reservation, or exemption from service. Temporary reservation could also be requested and could last for a few weeks or for an indefinite period. The age of reservation initially depended on the category of work performed for the Corporation. As conscription and reservations would eventually require the Corporation to hire women in the Engineering Division, the attempts by the Engineering Division to exempt all BBC engineers from conscription reveals an extreme reluctance towards employing female staff or making any concessions in standard hiring procedures, and will be explored in detail. The specifics regarding women's training and placement within the Engineering Division will be further detailed in Chapter Five.

The launch of the Forces Programme in January 1940 did not require the building of new transmitters, and therefore pressure to find more Engineering staff was limited to filling vacant positions. Although the call-up had diminished the BBC staff of Junior Maintenance Engineers (JMEs), most engineering staff became reserved at the relatively low age of twenty-three, meaning that the BBC was permitted to retain a large core of staff.⁵⁶ The strain on the Engineering workforce began in earnest in late 1940 when the Overseas Services Division rapidly expanded. Although in existence in a different form before the war, the Overseas Services Division had been limited to the Empire Service and a small number of language services, initially only in Arabic, Spanish and Portuguese. New language services sprang up in the face of German aggression on the Continent. With a greater offering in a diverse array of languages, the broadcasting days increased, as well as the need for more studios and transmitters. Not only did this increase put pressure on Station Design and Installation, but the increased capacity and output inevitably required more transmitting capacity.

By the end of 1940, the BBC had increased its output of non-English programming to include thirty-four different languages, up from ten languages at the beginning of the war.⁵⁷ This increase was just the beginning. By 1943, the European Services alone were broadcasting in twenty-four languages, for a total of forty-four hours per day. If the Overseas Services are included, this pushed the number of languages to forty-six, and the

⁵⁶ Memo, 20-Nov-40, EEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁵⁷ *The BBC Handbook 1941*, 9.

programming hours to 100.⁵⁸ The drive for diverse language programming was dubbed the Triple Expansion Plan and was funded, and pursued, at the request of the Government. The Plan formed an important part of the wartime propaganda effort. The expansion included the establishment of sixty new transmitters and studios, and the addition of 1,000 staff in the Engineering Division alone.⁵⁹ The issues of reservation and recruitment strategy were most acute during this critical period of growth.

A large proportion of engineering staff worked in occupational categories that exempted them from service in the Forces at the age of twenty-three, an upper level that would remain mostly unchanged throughout the war period.⁶⁰ In comparison, the administrative staff had an initial reservation age of twenty-five that was raised to thirty in 1940, and again in a rolling escalation to thirty-five in 1942.⁶¹ Maintaining this low age was a significant advantage for the Engineering Division which allowed the Division to retain more experienced technical staff. However, not all Engineering staff had exemption levels this low. Manual and clerical staff in Engineering were subject to increasing conscription interventions. These constant changes were especially hard on the Specialist Departments that employed carpenters, painters, transport drivers, stokers, gatekeepers, lapidarists, and male clerks. Within the O&M Department, there was also a group of engineers that had a higher reservation age. These were Programme Engineers. Programme Engineers were classified in the Administrative and Executive grade, as they were not required to have obtained a GPO Certificate in electrical engineering, have graduated from a qualified technical college, or obtained a university degree in engineering.⁶²

The Programme Engineers (PEs) were relative newcomers to the Engineering Division and were in the Studios Section of the O&M Department. Previously they had filled positions in the Programme Division as Producers' Assistants, Junior Producer's Assistants, Studio Assistants, and Junior Studio Assistants, and had been incorporated into the Engineering Division as PEs and Junior Programme Engineers (JPEs) in May 1939.⁶³ This move had ended a protracted dispute between the Programme and Engineering Divisions over which division was more qualified to determine the proper balance and control of the

⁵⁸ *The BBC Year Book 1944*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1944), 71 & 110.

⁵⁹ Letter, 10-Dec-41, EEO to Charles (MOI), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a," (BBC WAC R49/194/3, 1941).

⁶⁰ Letter, 27-Jan-41, EEO to Charles (MOI), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b," (BBC WAC R49/194/2, 1941). Some categories of engineers were initially reserved at twenty-five. By the time the age limit in this category was to thirty, these staff members had been transferred to a different job classification that was reserved at twenty-three.

⁶¹ Memo, 12-Jun-40, SE(S) to EEO; 19-Jun-40, EEO to SE(S), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁶² Memo, 19-Jun-40, EEO to SE(S), *ibid*.

⁶³ "Exits and Entrances," *Ariel*, October 1939, 7.

programming output. The Music Department was especially concerned with maintaining control over sound quality.⁶⁴ The *BBC Handbook 1940* described the new designation and the duties performed, which included microphone placement, the monitoring of audio levels, and sound effects production.⁶⁵ Although most of the PEs and JPEs were not certificate-qualified engineers, they were considered highly skilled.⁶⁶ Due to the difficulties involved in obtaining deferments for JPEs and PEs, this category of staff was the first to be considered for alternative recruitment strategies, which included the use of boys under conscription age and women.

As a countermeasure to the loss of the younger JPEs, who were much more likely to be called-up than the more senior PEs, the suggestion was made to recruit boys of seventeen who would be retained until they reached the conscription age of twenty. The first Effects Boys were hired in Bristol in May 1940.⁶⁷ Although juveniles were the first hired, women were also deemed suitable, especially those with a musical or theatrical background. Those with a musical education were thought to have a trained ear needed to control the musical output, and those with a theatrical background were useful in producing sound effects.⁶⁸ In order to staff the ambitious Overseas Services Division expansion, these two categories of staff, youths under conscription age and female technical staff, would form a broader part of BBC Engineering Division recruitment strategy and will be discussed further in the next section.

Outside of this limited initiative with youths in Bristol, BBC Engineering focussed on a strategy of retention rather than replacement. This was largely pushed by Noel Ashbridge, who was supported by the BBC Control Board headed by the then-Director-General Frederick Ogilvie.⁶⁹ Minutes from the Board of Governors meetings in 1940 and 1941 indicates that Ashbridge was reluctant to consider using alternative staff, especially women, to fill positions in the growing Overseas Services Division.⁷⁰ Ashbridge contended that the BBC had already sacrificed many of its most experienced staff to the Royal Air Force, and as a result was having to recruit engineers with little to no training in wireless engineering,

⁶⁴ Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 113-118.

⁶⁵ *The BBC Handbook 1940*, 28. The *BBC Handbook 1940* gave the misleading impression that Programme Engineers were a newly created job category, not just a new designation for existing staff.

⁶⁶ Memo, 16-May-40, DFD to SSE; 12-Jun-40, SE(S) to EEO, 24-Jul-40, SSE to SE(S); 31-Jul-40, DFD to DSA; 26-Dec-40, DPA to DPA(O), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁶⁷ Memo, 18-Apr-40, SE(S) to EEO; 4-Jun-40, AEEO to SE(S), *ibid*.

⁶⁸ Memo, 24-Jul-40, SSE to SE(S), *ibid*.; Memo, 4-Sep-40, SE(S) to SSE; Questions, c. Sep-40, author unknown, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁶⁹ Memo, 5-Feb-41, DSA to DG, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b." This memo indicated that the Control Board had approved the request for total exemption of Engineering Division staff at a 20 November 1940 meeting.

⁷⁰ Minutes, 20-Nov-40, Red Notes/Women Engineers, "Board of Governors Minutes," (BBC WAC R1/8/1, 1940); Minutes, 29-Jan-41, "Board of Governors, Minutes."

as well as inexperienced youths. His proposal was that in consideration of these factors, the MOLNS should agree to a full reservation of all BBC engineers.⁷¹ The proposal was supported by Ogilvie and presented to the Minister of Labour Ernest Bevin in December 1940, but remained unresolved for ten months.⁷² In October 1941, under pressure from the Forces and the Merchant Navy, the MOLNS ruled that the BBC Engineering staff were liable for conscription between the recently lowered conscription age of nineteen and the reservation age of twenty-three.⁷³

The adverse ruling on total exemption for Engineering staff came at a time when reservation rule changes threatened to take upwards of eleven JPEs and PEs from the Corporation.⁷⁴ The narrowing of options for Engineering to retain younger JPEs and PEs sparked a multi-divisional conflict between the Engineering Division, the Programme Division, the Administration Division, and the Overseas Services Division. Perhaps sensing an opportunity to help with their own recruitment difficulties, the Overseas Services Division made a bid to move the affected PEs into roles that carried a lower deferment age. This behind-the-scenes manoeuvring angered both the Programme Division and the Engineering Division.⁷⁵ While the Overseas Services Division felt they were retaining staff that Engineering was carelessly sacrificing to the government, Programming and Engineering felt the Overseas Services Division was attempting to lure much-needed staff with the promise of higher pay and reservation.⁷⁶ While the dispute triggered a temporary deferment for the PEs,⁷⁷ the issue highlighted the stresses created within the organisation by the tightly-controlled labour market, conscription and reservation regulations, and the Engineering Division's continued delay in considering alternative staffing.

While Studios were grappling with the potential loss of their Programme Engineers, the status of staff in Transmitters came under threat from both the MOLNS and the General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen. The Forces and the Merchant Navy were also in desperate need of wireless operators, and increasingly saw the BBC as a source to solve their recruitment problems. Early in the war, the BBC had negotiated that a significant number of its Engineering staff be classified as either Electrical Engineers

⁷¹ Memo, 29-Oct-40, C(E) to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁷² Draft Letter, 7-Dec-40, DG to Pick (MOI); Letter, 10-Dec-40, Pick to Ogilvie, *ibid.* The file only contains a draft of the 7 December 1940 letter sent to the Director-General of the Ministry of Information, Frank Pick, but it is clear from Pick's response that Ogilvie's final letter was dated 7 December 1940. Pick felt there was little chance the BBC's request would be approved.

⁷³ Draft Memo, 16-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a."

⁷⁴ Memo, 10-Dec-40, HPE to SE(S), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁷⁵ Memo, 16-Dec-40, DEurS to HPE, *ibid.*

⁷⁶ Memo, 6-Dec-40, HPE to SE(S); 12-Dec-40, HPE to SE(S); 16-Dec-40, DEurS to HPE; 27-Dec-40, DSA to AWRD, *ibid.*; Memo, 27-Jan-41, EPAO to GEO; 5-Feb-41, EEO to GEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b."

⁷⁷ Memo, 26-Dec-40, DPA to DPA(O), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

(Professional) or Electrical Engineers (Maintenance) with a reservation age of twenty-three. The MOLNS began to question these classifications in May 1940, by suggesting that BBC engineers were Wireless Engineers, which had a higher reservation age of thirty.⁷⁸ This push became more forceful by the end of 1940 when the MOLNS more assertively questioned the classification and requested certification.⁷⁹

Peter Florence, with assistance from the MOI, deftly negotiated with the MOLNS to have all BBC Engineers transferred into another occupational classification – Charge Hand, Wireless Transmitting and Receiving Equipment – that had been originally designated for GPO personnel only.⁸⁰ This change in job classification fixed the upper limit at twenty-three for engineering staff in the Operations and Maintenance Department for the rest of the war. Part of the success of the negotiations had been a reciprocal agreement by the BBC to agree to use women in some operational roles.⁸¹ The interplay between government departments and the BBC would prove pivotal in recruitment and reservation of female staff and will be discussed further in the next section.

When the BBC received a rejection of its request for a total exemption in October 1941, Florence was in the middle of negotiating an agreement on conscription age, as the government continued to push down the lower limits of conscription, this time from nineteen, to eighteen-and-a-half. Hoping to prevent potential loss of youths who had been an important part of his recruitment strategy during the course of 1941, Florence had manoeuvred the MOLNS into conceding that BBC Engineering could maintain a call-up age of nineteen, rather than the new lower eighteen-and-a-half.⁸² This new agreement was jeopardised by Ashbridge's decision to appeal the October 1941 rejection of total exemption.⁸³

Ashbridge's position was again supported by Ogilvie, who submitted the request for appeal to the BBC's Board of Governors on 3 November 1941.⁸⁴ Ashbridge felt, among other points, that the BBC's rapid expansion was at the behest of the government and as part of the government's propaganda effort deserved the full resources of qualified engineers. Although Engineering had begun to use women in some operational engineering

⁷⁸ Letter, 9-May-40, Manager Grafton Street Employment Exchange to EEO; 27-May-40, EEO to Manager Grafton Street Employment Exchange, *ibid*.

⁷⁹ Letter, 15-Nov-40, Hatton (MOLNS) to EEO, *ibid*.

⁸⁰ Memo, 4-Dec-40, EEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b."; Letter, 27-Jan-41, EEO to Charles (MOI); 28-Mar-41, Hooper (MOLNS) to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁸¹ Draft Memo, 16-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a."

⁸² Draft memo, 16-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid*.

⁸³ Memo, 21-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid*.

⁸⁴ Minute Paper G.89/41, 3-Nov-41, *ibid*.

roles, Ashbridge maintained that women replacements could never adequately replace departing male staff.⁸⁵ Fearful that the MOLNS would withdraw the offer of concession on youths, Florence appealed in vain for his superiors to ratify the offer to keep the call-up age for the Engineering Division to nineteen.⁸⁶ Unfortunately Florence's request was made the same day that the appeal had been submitted to the MOLNS.

The appeal for a total exemption was finally rejected in December 1941, but the concessions to retain young men that had been negotiated in October was ultimately preserved. Florence's role in the negotiation process earned him praise from his direct superior.⁸⁷ By this time, women were already working in technical roles, with the first set of trainees available for placement in August 1941. In January 1942, shortly after the final rejection of Engineering's appeal for total exemption, the terms of reservation were again changed, and the BBC was able to request individual deferments instead of trying to exempt broad occupational categories. Additional hurdles would emerge in 1942 as many of the new female staff were also subject to conscription. In December 1942, Florence again successfully negotiated with the MOLNS to hold the call-up age for male youths in Engineering at nineteen when the general call-up age was lowered further to eighteen.⁸⁸ This arrangement had a final challenge in December 1943, leading BBC Engineering to accept a call-up age of eighteen-and-an-half.⁸⁹ Recruitment of female Technical Assistants had been affected by government policy changes in 1942, and will be discussed more fully in the next section.

FROM WOMEN OPERATORS TO TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS

In late January 1941, the BBC Board of Governors endorsed the notion that the BBC should endeavour to use womanpower to fill vacancies created by the departure of male staff for the services. The following notation in was made in the minutes of the meeting:

Women Replacements: Arising on Minute 41(3), the D.G. said he would speak to all Controllers on the need for wider use of women to replace men called up for military service, particularly to [Controller of Engineering] who was not in favour of this expedient.⁹⁰

The Board had already broached the issue with the Engineering Division in 1940. At that time, Noel Ashbridge indicated that he did not object in principle, but that employing women, especially at transmitters, would be problematic.⁹¹ As the minute indicated,

⁸⁵ Memo, 31-Oct-41, C(E) to C(A), *ibid.*

⁸⁶ Memo, 3-Nov-41, EEO to C(A), *ibid.*

⁸⁷ Memo, 13-Dec-41, C(A) to DSA; Marginalia, 23-Dec-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid.*

⁸⁸ Letter, 1-Dec-42, Balsdon (MOLNS) to Charles (MOI); 23-Dec-42, EEO to Charles (MOI), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

⁸⁹ Memo, 24-Feb-44, EEO to C(E), *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Minutes, 19-Jan-41, "Board of Governors, Minutes."

⁹¹ Minutes, 20-November-40, Red Notes/Women Engineers, "Board of Governors Minutes."

Ashbridge continued to view the recruitment of women as a final step that should not be taken, despite the losses Engineering had endured to the services and government departments. While Ashbridge was voicing his reluctance to the Board and pursuing a blanket exemption for male Engineering staff, BBC records reveal that his senior staff, from as early as May 1940, were already devising strategies to use female staff to replace departing male staff.

In May 1940, Peter Florence suggested that women be used as Engineering transport drivers, because drivers, as well as manual workers in general, had a high reservation age.⁹² O&M was also mulling how to utilize womanpower. In July 1940, Edward Chadder indicated the Studios Section was prepared to hire 118 women to replace men in the London Control Room and in the studios – a suggestion already mooted by then-Senior Superintendent Engineer Rowland Wynn.⁹³ Chadder's calculations for replacement staff were written in response to an issue raised at an Engineering Division meeting. Leslie Hotine, the Superintendent Engineer for Transmitters, also responded to the request, but the substance of his response was not recorded.⁹⁴ Given that transmitters were not initially included in the approved postings for women, Hotine was likely to have been opposed to the idea. Wynn had passed the recommendations made by Chadder on to Florence. Florence was in charge of devising and implementing recruitment strategy, and the success or failure of utilising female technicians would depend on his cooperation.⁹⁵ During the initial recruitment efforts, Florence was still operating within the Administration Division and had more latitude in decision-making. While the GEO was still following up desperate leads for male staff, Florence announced in April 1941 that women would be recruited and trained to replace male engineers in operational roles.⁹⁶

On paper Florence's attitude towards the recruitment of Women Operators, or Technical Assistants as they were later termed, appears progressive, but it would be best to label his intentions as pragmatic. Florence's job was to make sure engineering staff positions were filled when and where they arose. This appeared to be his primary motivation. The main concern was that all practical sources of labour were exploited. Having already battled and lost with Ministry of Labour over the deferment of male staff, Florence thought his best alternative was to use women.⁹⁷

⁹² Letter, 15-May-40, EEO to Besso (MOLNS), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁹³ Memo, 27-Jul-40, SSE to SE(S), *ibid*.

⁹⁴ Memo, 4-Sep-40, SE(S) to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁹⁵ Initially the women were designated as Women Operators (WOs). The designation changed in July 1942. To avoid confusion, this chapter will only use the designation TA.

⁹⁶ Memo, 3-Apr-41, EEO to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁹⁷ Memo, 3-Nov-41, EEO to C(A), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a."

The main concentration of female staff would be in the O&M, which included the studios, recording and transmitter facilities. Women were also to be employed in other specialist departments including Civil Engineering, Equipment, Lines, Research, and Station Design and Installation. These jobs could be specialist functions such as tracers, or workshop roles as assemblers or coilwinders.⁹⁸ Florence's decision to begin training and recruiting women in early 1941 proved prescient. Conscription and direction of working-age women began in 1942 and created havoc within all divisions of the BBC. As the labour supply became tighter, the BBC was no longer free to hire any women they found suitable. Limitations were placed by the MOLNS which ultimately approved appointments and eventually even restricted advertising.⁹⁹ As discussed in Chapter Three, the Administration Division hiring managers chafed under the restrictions, and felt unjustly treated by the MOLNS, feeling that its wartime functions had earned it a place equal to that of government departments.¹⁰⁰

Complicating the BBC's relationship with the MOLNS, and subsequent recruitment efforts for clerical staff, was the independence in hiring of the Engineering Division. Because Florence had developed and implemented a recruitment strategy utilizing womanpower in the spring of 1941, Engineering had been able to negotiate a separate agreement, and recruit a large number of female staff. When the Administration Division began negotiations for shorthand-typists and other scarce female applicants in 1942, Florence had already secured an agreement to keep all 400 women who were subject to conscription who he had recruited before 26 March 1942. Florence had also gained further concessions on recruiting and retaining immobile women aged twenty-five and over, while retaining the possibility of recruiting mobile women aged thirty-one and over.¹⁰¹ The designations immobile and mobile referred to whether or not women could be moved from their usual place of residence for employment purposes. Mobile women were liable to be posted anywhere in the UK, while immobile women were subject to call-up but could not be stationed away from home. Immobile women usually were married or had other family responsibilities that necessitated that they remain where they were domiciled.¹⁰²

⁹⁸ Memo, 12-Dec-41, EEO to AWSO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; Letter/Report, 29-Jan-43, Hayes (BBC) to Olive (CBC), "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1," (BBC WAC R49/707/1, 1937-1946).

⁹⁹ Memo, 17-Nov-42, SSE to EEO; "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."; Meeting, 29-Jan-43, likely Tomlinson; Meeting, c. 6-Feb-43, likely Tomlinson; Memo, 3-Mar-43, AppO to DG, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁰⁰ Memo, 21-Apr-43, AppO to WarSO, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

¹⁰¹ Memo, 10-Aug-42, EEO to DSA, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹⁰² Lant, "Mobile Femininity," 15.

As noted above, the new female staff in the Engineering Division were first referred to as Women Operators. By August 1942 the designation had been changed to Technical Assistant, referred to as TA. The role of TA included both female and male staff and was ostensibly gender-neutral. Internally gender distinctions remained. Women were Technical Assistants (Female), TA(F)s, and men were Technical Assistants (Male), TA(M)s. The gender designation was not always used, but the plain TA reference more often applied to male staff than female.¹⁰³ The details on pay and promotion within the ranks of the TAs will be discussed more fully in Chapter Five (see page 133), but it is important to note here that once the roles of JME and the Women Operators were merged, the role of TA became gender-neutral on paper.

The 1942 women's labour draft ultimately had negative effects on the ability to recruit female TAs. By the beginning of 1943, the supply of eligible women had dwindled, and Engineering was again struggling to fill vacant positions. Florence's assistant recruiters complained that the quality of women being sent for interview were of poor quality, or that the applicants were too old.¹⁰⁴ As a result, the Engineering Division had begun to pursue more below recruitment age boys instead, and expanded their Youths in Training (YTs) programme to include boys as young as fifteen-and-a-half.¹⁰⁵ YTs were taken on as trainees mostly at transmitting stations. They were required to be promoted to TA, before they reached the age of eighteen. Failure to secure promotion at this age resulted in dismissal.¹⁰⁶ In turn the TA(M)s were employed until they reached draft age at nineteen, which as discussed above was eventually lowered to eighteen-and-an-half. Although the EEO's office admitted that girls under eighteen could also be hired, they ". . . had found from experience that they are of little use to us."¹⁰⁷

Florence first approached the MOLNS in March 1943 regarding the increasingly unsuitable applicants for the TA(F) positions, suggesting that the age and mobility restrictions were hampering recruitment.¹⁰⁸ In July 1943, the MOLNS began to soften its approach towards the BBC. Florence's Assistant, Miss Wilson, met with Alice M. Reisner at the MOLNS.¹⁰⁹ Reisner had also met with Douglas Clarke regarding the recruitment of secretarial staff in late 1942, but by February 1943 she had informed Clarke that the BBC was not in her remit.¹¹⁰ Reisner seemed to have a wide range of duties. She had also

¹⁰³ "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants," in *passim*.

¹⁰⁴ Letter, 25-Nov-43, AEEO to Powell (MOLNS), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹⁰⁵ EEI-194, 2-May-44, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Youth," (BBC WAC R13/81, 1941).

¹⁰⁶ Memo, 12-Apr-43, EEO to EIC Maida Vale, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ Memo, 9-Jul-43, AEEO to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹⁰⁸ Letter, 1-Mar-43, EEO to James (MOLNS), *ibid*.

¹⁰⁹ Memo, 20-Jul-43, EWEA to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹¹⁰ Meeting, 23-Oct-42, BBC and MOLNS; Telephone Record, 1-Feb-43, Sharpt to Reisner (MOLNS), "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

worked in the Public Relations Department at MOLNS in early 1942 and had coordinated with the BBC Producer Janet Quigley on talks in the "Calling All Women" series on girls entering jobs in engineering in conjunction with Caroline Haslett.¹¹¹ The recruitment of young women into technical posts, rather than secretarial posts, appeared to be Reisner's speciality, and may explain her refusal to negotiate with Douglas Clarke.

Although the MOLNS and the BBC had been negotiating from July 1943, increased demands for young males presumably in the lead up to D-Day in June 1944 seems to have allowed a more favourable recruitment regime for women aged nineteen to twenty-five.¹¹² In an effort to dislodge more young men with wireless engineering experience from the BBC, the MOLNS relented in the recruitment restrictions on young mobile women. By December 1943, engineering recruiters had been in put contact with Miss Black from the Women's Technical Service Register.¹¹³ This register collated a list of suitable female candidates from which the MOLNS was willing to supply the BBC with young mobile women with at least a secondary school certificate, and a background in mathematics, physics, or chemistry.¹¹⁴

The MOLNS were particularly willing to bend the rules in parts of the country where high-skilled jobs were less available, and young women with higher qualifications were difficult to place in skill-appropriate positions.¹¹⁵ These efforts by the MOLNS contrasts with previous academic studies. Penny Summerfield's research concluded that after 1942 the MOLNS was more interested in training and placing women in semi-skilled positions, rather than providing a potential career path or promotion.¹¹⁶ The MOLNS felt that some women with mathematics and science qualifications were overqualified for the routine jobs that were available, and specifically stipulated that the BBC could not allow these women to fill clerical positions without there being a technical component for the role.¹¹⁷ The BBC was only too happy to accept the MOLNS's offer. This concession accompanied a new push by the MOLNS for BBC Engineering to release all TA(M)s over eighteen years of age, as the conscription age had been again lowered in December 1943.¹¹⁸ At this time the BBC requested that 125 young women on the Women's Technical Service Register be provided

¹¹¹ Letter, 18-Sep-41, Reisner to Quigley; 28-Feb-42, Reisner to Quigley, "Contributor File: Haslett, Caroline."

¹¹² Memo, 20-Jul-43, EWEA to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹¹³ Letter, 2-Dec-43, Powell (MOLNS) to AEEO, *ibid*.

¹¹⁴ "Women's Technical Service Register", ed. Ministry of Labour and National Service (London 1941).

¹¹⁵ Telephone Record, 21-Oct-42, EWEA and Greenfield (MOLNS Leeds), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹¹⁶ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War*

¹¹⁷ Meeting, 10-Nov-43, Mr. Powell (MOLNS) and EWEA, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹¹⁸ Memo, 24-Feb-44, EEO to C(E), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

to replace departing staff.¹¹⁹ Florence insisted that the BBC was unable to place women under the age of nineteen. Rather than explaining that prior experience had been negative, Florence indicated that the jobs included potential posting to isolated areas, and under these conditions, the BBC was unable to provide supervision and welfare services for seventeen- and eighteen-year-old girls.¹²⁰

One caveat to this observation was the BBC career of Daphne Oram. In the post-war era, Oram would be one of the founders of the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and served with the BBC for nearly sixteen years. Oram was appointed as a Technical Assistant shortly before her eighteenth birthday in 1943 and would later achieve a wartime rank of Senior Programme Engineer.¹²¹ Oram's career contradicts the contention that the BBC's experience with young women under nineteen had been either negative or non-existent. Her age at hiring, seventeen years old, as well as her career progression demonstrated the opposite. Oram consistently obtained promotion over the course of the war.¹²² It is difficult to know if Oram's recruitment age and success within the Engineering Division were anomalous, as there are no comprehensive recruitment or promotion lists for the TAs. In addition, data protection rules, as well as file retention policy, limit the researcher's access to certain types of data. The possibility remains that the BBC's arguments against using women under nineteen were part of a negotiating strategy which argued for the retention of the male TAs under the age of nineteen.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MOLNS AND THE MOI

Throughout the war, the BBC fulfilled its recruitment needs through a carefully orchestrated relationship with several government ministries. Key to the success and failures of the Corporation to negotiate retention of employees and to recruit new staff was its relationship with both the MOLNS and the MOI. In the case of the Engineering Division, this relationship was triangular, with the MOI mediating between the BBC and the MOLNS. Almost all the negotiations for the Engineering Division took place between S.D. Charles at the MOI and Peter Florence. The only direct contact with the MOLNS appeared to take place when inspections were arranged, or when negotiating over the recruitment of female staff.

¹¹⁹ Letter, 25-Mar-44, Powell (MOLNS) to EEO; 12-May-44, Jardine (MOLNS) to AEEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants." Although the first letter to discuss the number of women the MOLNS will send to the BBC from the Women's Technical Service Register is in March 1944, the correspondence indicated that the MOLNS were counting referrals made from November 1943.

¹²⁰ Letter, 23-Nov-43, EEO to Iley (MOLNS), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹²¹ Letter, 28-Sep-42, EEO to Oram, Daphne Oram, "BBC Employment Papers," (Goldsmiths).ORAM 3/1/109

¹²² Memo, 8-Feb-45; 22-May-45, EEO to Oram, *ibid*.ORAM 3/1/100; 3/1/108

Similar to the Administration Division, Engineering's direct relationship with the MOLNS was occasionally frustrating. The organisational structure of the MOLNS left room for local branches to make arbitrary decisions, and rulings that contradicted those settled with the national office. For example in 1940 when wireless operators were in demand, local MOLNS exchanges began to question job categories, and even carried out unnecessary inspections of BBC facilities.¹²³ During one inspection, the MOLNS representative asserted that the time allotted for building works was overly-generous, and ordered that the contractors work weekend shifts.¹²⁴ When the Maintenance Engineers were moved to a more favourable deferment category, some of the local MOLNS exchange offices refused to reclassify the transmitter staff.¹²⁵ One MOLNS Exchange Manager even questioned the validity of the classification, before confirming the BBC arrangement with the national office in London.¹²⁶ Siân Nicholas has also noted in her book *The Echo of War* that the Programme Division also faced conflicts with government ministries exceeding their expertise in matters concerning programme content and presentation.¹²⁷

The mediation by the MOI with the MOLNS on behalf of the BBC added a degree of complexity to the negotiating procedures. However, the use of the MOI as a cushion between the BBC and the MOLNS was often beneficial. Some of the letters in the BBC files from the MOLNS indicates that the demands and requests could produce sharp responses on both sides.¹²⁸ The Engineering hierarchy often used military metaphors to describe this relationship. Rowland Wynn referred to changes to the call-up age in 1944 as "... another torpedo fired by the Ministry of Labour that has burst amongst our lower decks."¹²⁹ The intervening layer of the MOI appeared to reduce tensions between the BBC and the MOLNS. This cushion also lengthened the decision-making process. As issues could take months to resolve, muddled decisions and misremembered agreements occurred.

One case highlights the frustration that BBC officials expressed in their dealings with a vast government organisation like the MOLNS. Wynn reported that during an interview with a TA(F), Sybil Temperton, in July 1942 the MOLNS had expressed negative views about the BBC. Harold Bishop, then the Assistant Controller of Engineering, was

¹²³ Letter, 18-May-40, EEO to MOLNS Northampton; 15-Nov-40, MOLNS to EEO; 4-Dec-40, EEO to MOLNS; "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."; Memo, 7-Jan-42, Eic Evesham to SE(S), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹²⁴ Memo, 10-Jan-42, Eic Evesham to SE(S), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹²⁵ Letter, 23-May-41, Florence to Hooper; Letter, 11-Jun-41, from Head of MOLNS Exchange; "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b."

¹²⁶ This pushed the call-up age from 23 to 25, giving the MEs two years more service with the BBC before being put on active duty.

¹²⁷ Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 73.

¹²⁸ Letter, 16-Apr-41, Wood (MOLNS) to Charles (MOI), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b."

¹²⁹ Memo, 31-Mar-44, AC(E) to C(E), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

incensed and thought the matter should be brought up with the MOLNS. Frustrated by the incident, Bishop complained to Ashbridge that the BBC was accorded no status, and that any concessions made to the BBC were down to a heavy application of persuasion on the MOLNS exerted by Florence and others.¹³⁰ The details of the remarks to Temperton are not elaborated on in the file, but the incident clearly sparked a simmering resentment within the Engineering Division. Bishop suggested that Temperton's report should be scrutinised, and if confirmed, that a complaint should be lodged with the MOLNS. He added that:

[i]t seems to be quite monstrous that we should have to carry on in this way. We are doing a job of national importance and should be treated accordingly. We should not have our staff problems decided by the caprices of an uninformed and apparently antagonistic Ministry.¹³¹

These conflicts also appeared when trying to retain the young men hired during the war. The MOLNS proposed in November 1943 that the BBC should release these young men when they reached the age of eighteen. Before the deal was finalised, the MOLNS wrongly claimed to the MOI that Florence had agreed on the BBC's behalf to release all young men at eighteen if replacements could be found. Florence was furious. He vigorously denied this concession, and the dispute required several rounds of letters between the MOLNS, MOI and the BBC before the issue was resolved.¹³² In the dispute concerning the PEs in the Studios Section noted above, S.D. Charles in consultation with another BBC official had placed a temporary stop on the call-up of PEs but had not informed Florence of this action. Both Florence and Douglas Clarke were unaware of how the PEs had obtained indefinite deferment.¹³³ In both these cases the confusion resulted in delays that benefitted the BBC as the inaction meant that any personnel losses were suspended, but the disputes undoubtedly heightened tensions.

In the process of negotiation with the MOLNS, the files indicate that the BBC was subject to both external criticism and harassment. The General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen suggested that the BBC was hoarding ex-naval men on their staff and pilfering young men just out of training.¹³⁴ The MOLNS also reported that renewed attention to BBC Engineering staff had been prompted by the receipt of anonymous letters sent to the Ministry. The complaints had focussed on the number of young men working

¹³⁰ Memo, 22-Jul-42, AC(E) to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

¹³¹ Memo, 22-Jul-41, AC(E) to C(E), *ibid*.

¹³² Letter, 15-Feb-44, EEO to Charles (MOI); 11-Feb-44, Balsden (MOLNS) to Charles (MOI); 17-Feb-44, Charles (MOI) to EEO; 24-Feb-44, EEO to Charles (MOI), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

¹³³ Telephone Record, 28-Dec-40, EEO and C(E), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."; Memo, 12-Feb-41, WarSO to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b." The BBC official was most likely John Salt who was the Director of European Services.

¹³⁴ Letter, 18-Aug-41, Killingback to deVilliers; Memo, 16-Oct-41, EEO to DSA; Letter, 20-Oct-41, Buddell to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a."; Letter, 27-Jan-42, Buddell to Florence, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

at the BBC.¹³⁵ The General Register and Record Office of Shipping and Seamen continued to harass the BBC even after their initial dispute had been resolved, on the mistaken belief that changes in reservation ages in 1942 would make BBC staff available.¹³⁶

In a more cryptic 1940 reference, it appears that Research Department staff, particularly those who looked to be of draft age, were being hounded as they left work.¹³⁷ The BBC files do not contain specifics of the particular incident, but do record that Research was instructed to contact the police if the problem persisted.¹³⁸ During the same time period, a flurry of memos indicate that members of Parliament had raised the issue of how many men under thirty were in the BBC's employ, and how many of these men were medically unfit.¹³⁹ In this case, Brendan Bracken, the Minister of Information, responded that 668 BBC male staff were between eighteen and thirty years of age, and 310 were medically unfit.¹⁴⁰ As will be discussed further in Chapter Six, the BBC was under constant surveillance and scrutiny, and questions were raised in Parliament about any employment concessions.

CONCLUSIONS

The BBC stood in a murky realm between private corporation and government department. The Corporation's position as a quasi-governmental organisation did provide some benefit in negotiating the retention of staff who were of conscription age. This was particularly true for the Engineering Division. The Engineering Division, like the Administration Division, chose to delay hiring women to replace staff members departing for the services during the initial phase of the war. As Harold Smith and Penny Summerfield have both noted, the MOLNS initially viewed increasing women's labour participations in technical engineering positions as unnecessary.¹⁴¹ Mark Crowley indicated that the GPO also held a similar attitude. However, some early changes were pursued as a significant number of GPO staff had joined the services before the war began. For the BBC conscription and reservation ages, along with recruitment concessions, were part of a long and hard-fought negotiation

¹³⁵ Letter, 30-Sep-41, Killingback to de Villiers; Memo, 16-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a."

¹³⁶ Letter, 27-Jan-42, Buddell to Florence, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b." Buddell claimed that 79 ex-seaman with radio certifications were employed by the BBC.

¹³⁷ Memo, 23-Jan-43, EEO to Grose, 4-Mar-43, Grose to EEO, *ibid*.

¹³⁸ Memo, 23-Jan-43, EEO to Grose, *ibid*.

¹³⁹ Memo, 2-Mar-43, ADP(H) to DSA; 11-Mar-43, EEO to ADP(H); 31-Mar-43, EEO to Director, Secretariat; 1-Apr-43, AEEO to Director, Secretariat; 6-Apr-43, DDO to Director, Secretariat, *ibid*.

¹⁴⁰ "B.B.C. Staff (Military Service)", Hansard, 24-Feb-43, vol 387, c166,

https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1943/feb/24/bbc-staff-military-service#S5CV0387PO_19430224_HOC_203, accessed, 20-9-2018.

¹⁴¹ Harold L. Smith, "British Feminism in the Second World War," in *Gender, Labour, War and Empire: Essays on Modern Britain*, ed. Philippa Levine and Susan R. Grayzel (Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 94-95; Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 168-169.

effort. Noel Ashbridge continued to pursue total exemption for the Engineering Division, while the management team directly under his supervision quietly began preparing for what was possibly inevitable, hiring female technicians.

Once the decision was made, close to 1,000 women trained for technical jobs, and nearly twenty-five percent of the staff in the BBC Engineering Division during the Second World War were women. The combination of labour shortages, conscription into the services, and the expansion of radio-programming streams provided opportunities for both women and young men under conscription age. Even though some of the departments in the Division were more receptive than others, the necessity of using new sources of labour was accepted. In addition to internal challenges to incorporating womanpower, the BBC also faced changing conscription and labour draft conditions that threatened to drain their new sources of female and male labour. Under constant pressure from the Treasury to stay within budget parameters and reduce staffing levels, the BBC had to optimise all resources including staff. As with Administration Division, this optimisation meant expanding women's opportunities. The training and deployment schemes that were followed by the Engineering Division are the subject of Chapter Five.

Chapter Five WOMEN REPLACEMENTS AND THEIR PLACE IN THE ENGINEERING DIVISION

When questioned how she had joined the Engineering Division, Mary Garratt stated that she received an enormous booklet in the mail in response to her letter asking about prospective employment at the BBC.¹ Denise Tate remembered responding to a radio appeal for young women with mathematics or physics backgrounds to join the BBC. During her BBC interview however, she was queried about her sewing skills.² Mary Lawson, Rita Jaye, Doreen Tagholm, and Doreen Pout all recalled being directed into the BBC service by the MOLNS.³ Whether they entered by design or direction, they all ended up in various parts of the Operations and Maintenance Department.

Once the initial decision had been made to utilise women in technical posts, the Engineering Division began the next phase, which included setting up a training regimen, and subsequently deploying trainees to different Engineering departments. The training programme was designed to optimize the usefulness of those recruited. However, as will be seen, limitations were placed on the women's training regimen and the roles that female staff members were assigned. Some of the placement decisions were straight-forward and met with little resistance from supervisors and staff. More entrenched attitudes had to be confronted in areas that pre-war had been strictly male-only on all occupational levels, from Engineers-in-Charge to cleaning staff. As this chapter will show, during training and eventual placement, issues of promotion, pay, and enhanced training came to the fore. How the BBC coped with dilution, defined by the BBC as dilution of experience, will also be examined in conjunction with the establishment of the Engineering Training School. Finally, the roles that women performed in different sections of O&M will be detailed, including the Technical Recording Section, the Studio Centres, Transmitters, and H-Group Transmitters.

ENGINEERING TRAINING SCHOOL

One of the outcomes of the recruitment of women into the Engineering staff was the establishment of the Engineering Training School, which would continue to be permanently housed at Wood Norton in the post-war years. Although the training programme was not

¹ Garratt, interview.. Garratt joined in 1941 when she was 21.

² Denise Tate Meekums, interview by Kate Terkanian, 3 February, 2015. Tate joined in 1944 at the age of 19.

³ Mary Lawson, "Memories: Mary Lawson," <http://www.orbem.co.uk/misc/lawson1.htm>; Rita Jaye, "Memories of Life at 'H' Group Transmitters by Rita Jaye, Nee Barnsley," <http://www.orbem.co.uk/misc/jaye.htm>; Mavis Nicholson, *What Did You Do in the War, Mummy? Women in World War II* (London: Chatto & Windus, 1995), 188-193; Doreen Pout Bouskill, interview by Kate Terkanian, 2014. Lawson joined in 1941, Jaye in 1943, and Tagholm in 1944.

initially established for women, they were quickly introduced into the programme. However reluctantly some engineering staff may have allowed women into their ranks, the introduction of the training school was a coup that many in the Division had been pursuing since at least the early 1930s.⁴ By July 1943, 621 women had been through the Engineering Training School.⁵ Conceived of as a programme that would be beneficial for both new entrants and for grooming potential EiCs, a school run by Engineering had been rejected in the interwar years as overlapping with the remit of the Staff Training Division, and because of its potential to promote a competing “esprit de department” over the “esprit de Corporation”.⁶ As noted in Chapter Four, the Engineering Division operated in a compartmentalised fashion and developed many of its own systems, including a different job grading system and even a different form for annual reviews.⁷ This worry that the establishment of a separate Engineering Training School would isolate the Engineering Division was not unwarranted. However, the temporary suspension of Staff Training during the war, coupled with the need to quickly hire and train staff for vacant Engineering posts, allowed Engineering to capitalise on the opportunity to establish a separate Engineering Training School.

Although the original scope of the Training School did not include training both female and male recruits, the programme was co-educational from the start. The school was already in the planning stages months before Ashbridge had conceded that female technicians would be needed to supplement the ranks of the Junior Maintenance Engineers. Initially the programme was intended for Youths-in-Training, with the thought that women could be brought into the equation if and when the exigencies of war required.⁸ However, Rowland Wynn was quick to suggest that women be brought in to avoid any uncertainties caused by changing conscription policies.⁹ The course was designed for new staff with limited or no understanding of broadcast engineering. However, recruits were expected to have an educational background in mathematics, physics, or chemistry. Divided into two sections, the first part included two weeks of classroom training focussing on theory, with

⁴ Memo, 21-Dec-37, AC(E) to C(E), "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1."

⁵ Memo, 13-July 1943, EWEO to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b." Twenty-one women had failed or had not been confirmed after training. A further sixty-three had left the BBC for various reasons, another thirteen had moved to inconvenient locations and one had died. This was a total loss of ninety-eight. In comparison, there were 3,446 staff in the Engineering Division in March 1943.

⁶ Memo, 15-Dec-37, STH to C(E), "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1."

⁷ Memo, 17-Apr-40, EEO to Wynn, "Left Staff, Wynn, Rowland Tempest Beresford." The grading system was only brought into conformation with the rest of the organisation in 1940.

⁸ Memo, 25-Feb-41, EEO to SSE, "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1."

⁹ Memo, 26-Feb-41, SSE to EEO, *ibid*.

a further four weeks dedicated to hands-on training. The first session began on 19 May 1941 and was comprised of both male and female students.¹⁰

Questions about the efficacy and the scope of the training arose over the first year, and by October 1942 Wynn recommended that the training period be expanded with classroom instruction lasting four weeks with an additional six to eight weeks of practical training.¹¹ Reflecting on her training period, former Technical Assistant Mary Garratt indicated that the classroom instruction in 1941, although thorough, was lacking. She indicated that:

‘. . . [they] had a six weeks’ induction course, that was supposed to do with engineering, electricity, and radio and so on. And it was all rather sort of difficult. It was difficult in one way because it wasn’t very deep. It was just a surface, superficial approach to it . . .’¹²

Although Wynn was recommending a longer period of theoretical instruction, Peter Florence felt that too much theory at the beginning only led to confusion. After visiting a WAAF radio operations and maintenance training facility at Yatesbury in Wiltshire, home of the Radio Direction Finding School for the Royal Air Force, Florence was even more convinced that a slow, steady drip of theory on the job would be more beneficial than an intense training programme; he recommended delaying substantial theoretical training until women had completed three to six months on the job.¹³

By January 1943, the training scheme consisted of a four-week theoretical A1 Course, followed by a specialist eight-week practical B1 Course.¹⁴ The one drawback to the more rigorous training schedule was that only three complete sessions were held per year. This translated into a maximum of 195 trainees per year, as class size was limited to no more than sixty-five per session. This new system created a backlog which was mitigated by placing trainees in post while awaiting a place in the training school and increasing the frequency of the A course to eight sessions per year.¹⁵ Training became a bottleneck for the Engineering Division which would spill over into the post-war era. After 1947, promotion was predicated on attending a three-month training programme which was limited to those considered suitable for promotion.¹⁶ During the war, the bottleneck was

¹⁰ Memo, 11-Apr-41, EEO to AC(E); 23-Apr-41, EEO to SSE; 10-Jun-41, EEO to EiCs, *ibid*.

¹¹ Report, 4 -Jul-42, SSE; 21-Oct-42, SSE, *ibid*.

¹² Garratt, interview.

¹³ Memo, 24-Nov-41, EEO to SSE, "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1." For information on the Yatesbury facility see: Oral History Interview, Jarvis, Ruth, Imperial War Museum, 11 March 2003, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80023072>; Farley, Hugh Desmond John, 9 May 2007, <https://www.iwm.org.uk/collections/item/object/80029526>

¹⁴ Letter/Report, 29-Jan-43, Hayes (BBC) to Olive (CBC), *ibid*.

¹⁵ Memo, 25-Mar-43, EEO to SSE; 31-Mar-43, SSE to EEO, *ibid*.

¹⁶ A.E. Fletcher, "Engineering Log," *Staff Association Bulletin*, August 1948, 6.

circumvented by taking on candidates as supernumeraries, who attended the course when a place was available.¹⁷

In late 1942, Wynn suddenly proposed that future courses should be segregated by gender. Florence indicated that the immediate execution of this suggestion would be difficult and requested a six-month delay.¹⁸ There was no indication of what prompted Wynn to make this request, but there was also no indication that the request was ever implemented. Perhaps Florence's request to delay implementation was a method to continue with mixed classes in the face of internal opposition. BBC documents suggest that training courses were still co-educational in November 1943, and that future courses would be composed of at least twenty women.¹⁹ The only further change to the training regimen occurred in early 1944 when there was an influx of female staff. As discussed in Chapter Four, the MOLNS pressured the BBC to release eighteen-year-old male staff, most likely in preparation for the D-Day invasion in June 1944 (see page 122). To compensate for this loss of staff, the MOLNS agreed to let the BBC hire a number of young, mobile women of conscription age. This coincides with the recruitment of both Denise Tate and Doreen Tagholm. The combined A1/B1 Course was shortened by three weeks to quickly integrate the new female recruits, and the B1 Course was run by seven different on-station trainers, rather than at the Training School.²⁰

As Mary Garratt indicated, the training seemed overwhelming at the point of entry. After gaining work experience, some of the female TAs requested permission, and funding, to continue improving their knowledge through local colleges or correspondence courses. Although reimbursement for these types of courses had been routinely offered for male staff before the war, Florence indicated the BBC could not justify the expense for female staff. In Florence's opinion, he did not think that:

. . . [the BBC could] rely sufficiently upon the permanency of women operators in the Corporation to agree financial outlay to improve their theoretical knowledge. Since we need them to know as much about the operation of their stations as they can learn[,] the best place for them to learn is on the job. Although your senior staff cannot afford very much time in teaching them the theory of wireless practice I do feel that taking into consideration their probable impermanency they will be better in a short period learning from the job.²¹

¹⁷ Memo, 28-Jun-43, SSE to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹⁸ Memo, 17-Dec-42, EEO to SSE, "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1."

¹⁹ Memo, 3-Dec-43, SSE to C(E) et.al.; Minutes, 18-Nov-43, *ibid*.

²⁰ Memo, 31-Mar-43, AC(E) to C(E), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2b."

²¹ Memo, 19-Jan-42, EEO to EIC Droitwich, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

Florence strongly urged all the EiCs to provide whatever assistance they could in helping the women broaden their theoretical knowledge.²² During the development of the Training School, a member of the Engineering Staff had compiled an extensive training manual that was distributed to all trainees.²³ This book was an invaluable resource on theory and practice. John Philips still had his copy when interviewed for this thesis in 2015, and Mary Garratt also mentioned the "blue book", regretting that it was no longer in her possession.²⁴

Some of the engineers at managerial level wanted to limit the women's training to operational level only.²⁵ This attitude demonstrated an unwillingness to provide more than cursory instruction, and fits into the general experience of women's work in the wider wartime workforce. Penny Summerfield noted that this strategy was used in the factory setting to underscore women's inferiority.²⁶ Despite some of the EiCs following this general pattern, others in the BBC Engineering Division had difficulty maintaining this attitude. There was a constant worry that women would become bored when the jobs became routine. This feeling spread across the different sections of O&M and was voiced about transmitter work as well as recording.²⁷

The women themselves were also frustrated that the opportunities for further skills training was not always forthcoming.²⁸ Florence, and occasionally Wynn, appeared to advocate further training, not just to ensure that Engineering would be poised to use women more widely if necessary, but as advice to TA(F)s to bolster their chances for promotion.²⁹ Wynn and Edward Chadder, who was in charge of Studios, felt that women should have the opportunity for promotion, although Wynn doubted that any of them would have the qualifications.³⁰ One area that Chadder was less supportive of women was working on

²² Memo, 19-Jan-42, EEO to EiC Droitwich, *ibid*.

²³ "Staff Policy, Staff Training, Engineering Training School, File 1," *im passim*. The 227-page manual was written by trainer F.C. Brooker, largely in his spare time, and was completed in early 1942. However, full distribution of the manual to new staff was not achieved until the end of the year.

²⁴ John Phillips, interview by Kate Terkanian, 2015; Garratt, interview.

²⁵ Memo, 12-Aug-41, SE(S) to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

²⁶ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 168-169.

²⁷ Memo, 1-Jan-43, EEO to SE(S); "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."; Memo, 1-Sep-41, SSE to EEO; "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; Memo, 26-May-42, AC(E) to C(E); 22-Jul-42, EiC London Station to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

²⁸ Memo, 4-Sep-41, Acting EiC Edinburgh to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; Memo, 6-Sep-42, SSE to SE(S); 9-Sep-42, EEO to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

²⁹ Memo, 16-Sep-41, EEO to C(E); 27-Nov-41, EEO to SE(S), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; EEI-20, 23-Mar-42, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."; Memo, 17-Nov-42, SSE to EEO; 11-Nov-42, Barraclough to EEO; "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

³⁰ Memo, 26-Oct-41, SSE to SE(S); 13-Nov-41, SE(S) to AC(E), SSE & EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; Memo, 31-Mar-42, SSE to SEs; 17-Mar-42, SE(R) to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

Outside Broadcasts (OBs). Florence had wanted women to expand into OBs from as early as 1941. When Miss Jappy, a valued staff member at the Edinburgh transmitter, spoke to Florence in January 1943 about expanding the responsibilities allowed TAs, Florence again seized on the idea of women participating in OBs. Jappy was unhappy with the routine nature of the job and the limitations placed on her role. She was eager to be released from the BBC to do more direct work for the war effort.³¹

Chadder, under whose remit Outside Broadcasts fell, was reluctant. Among the various reasons given as to why women could not be part of OBs, were the outside conditions and the heavy lifting involved. However, he ultimately admitted his main concern was that women would be “passengers” and would hinder operations. While noting Chadder’s concerns, Florence countered:

As a matter of practical success I agree with a number of the difficulties which you have put forward. Nevertheless when you consider that women are doing mechanical work in factories all over the country, working on gantries, fitting parts of aircraft and so on, in positions which can hardly be described as comfortable, I do not see why we should not give some of the T.A.s (F) an opportunity to do O.B. work.³²

Wynn thought that the idea had merit and that a trial could be arranged.³³ Florence was happy to push the issue in this instance, not just because female staff had requested the opportunity, but also because the issue was on his agenda. These back-and-forth discussions around training and further opportunities beyond routine assignments indicated that Engineering was both wary about women’s capabilities and willing to provide chances for them to prove themselves on the job. Improved training, and with it, knowledge was a necessary step for promotion.

OPERATIONS AND MAINTENANCE

PAY AND PROMOTION

The Engineering Division met on 26 March 1941 to decide whether or not the Division would consider hiring women for operational roles within O&M.³⁴ Although details of what was discussed at the meeting are limited, during the meeting Ashbridge relented and dropped his opposition to hiring female technicians.³⁵ A final report on the plan was issued by Florence on 4 April 1941. Florence recommended that an initial group of twenty women with a preferential age range between twenty-one and thirty-five be recruited and trained

³¹ Memo, 1-Jan-43, EEO to SE(S), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

³² Memo, 12-Jan-43, EEO to SE(S), *ibid*.

³³ Memo, 6-Jan-42, SE(S) to EEO; 12-Jan-42, EEO to SE(S); 14-Jan-42, SSE to AC(E) & EEO, *ibid*.

³⁴ Memo, 24-Mar-41, Osborne to AC(E), SSE & EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

³⁵ Memo, 2-Apr-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid*.

immediately. Any future recruitment plans would be based on O&M's experience with this group. As he wished to maintain the normal pay grade and conditions of employment for operational staff, Florence insisted that recruitment and administration of women staff would be under his jurisdiction, rather than under Gweneth Freeman. As a concession to welfare issues, Florence also requested that a female assistant be hired to support the female staff. This first group was to be utilised only for work in studios and recording centres and was specifically excluded from roles at transmitters.³⁶ However, Florence continued to advocate wider uses of women, and the ambit into which the women would venture quickly expanded.

Florence was clear from the start that the women working in the Engineering Division would be administered on all levels by the Engineering Division.³⁷ Up to this point, women in weekly-paid clerical roles and operational roles at the BBC, such as machine operators and the PBX operators, were supervised by the Department of Office Administration but still under the umbrella of the Women's Establishment. Machine operators included women in the duplicating section using Roneo machines, and women in accounts using rudimentary computing machines like the Hollerith and Powers-Samas machines.³⁸ Florence insisted this distinction be scrupulously maintained, and even forbade EiCs to distribute guidelines from the Women's Establishment to the TA(F)s.³⁹ Whenever a question of jurisdiction arose, Florence was quick to quash any possible involvement of the Women's Establishment's staff.⁴⁰ That this status was unusual, and obliquely contested by supervisory staff in the Women's Establishment, was apparent in memos from various Women Staff Supervisors assuming TA(F)s would be put under their control. Within a year, this structure in the Engineering Division would be standard for the Corporation at large.

The women were paid a starting salary of £3.10.0 per week, which was roughly commensurate with that of the JMEs.⁴¹ In practice, TA(F)s were often older than male JMEs when they entered the BBC service, and could be paid at a higher wage due to age-

³⁶ Memo, 3-Apr-41, EEO to C(E), *ibid*.

³⁷ Memo, 3-Jul-41, EEO to SSE, *ibid*. In this memo Florence suggested that he was including the WSA in a previous memo to placate administrators outside of Engineering. He firmly stated to SSE Wynn that non-Engineering control of the Women Operators was the last thing he intended to let happen.

³⁸ Hicks, *Programmed Inequality*, 21-28; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 65-67. Roneograph was a duplicating machine that produced multiple copies from a stencil.

³⁹ Memo, 4-Nov-41, EiC Westerglen to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁴⁰ Memo, 15-Aug-41, AWSS to EEO; 19-Aug-41, EEO to AWSS; 28-Aug-41, AWSA to EEO; 6-Sep-41, EEO to Regional WSSs; 20-Sep-41, WSS Belfast to EEO; 25-Sep-41, EEO to WSS Belfast, *ibid*.

⁴¹ Memo, 3-Apr-41, EEO to C(E); Job Advertisement, c. May-41; Memo, 9-Jul-41, EEO to Secretary, BBC Staff (Wartime) Association, *ibid*.

associated payment policies.⁴² Despite receiving numerous complaints from both individual JMEs and the BBC Wartime Staff Association about this difference, Florence vigorously defended both the pay and grade of the TA(F)s.⁴³ Conversely, Florence's stance also meant that a TA(F) with higher educational qualifications could conceivably receive a lower wage, as he insisted that they were being paid for the position they occupied, not for educational attainment.⁴⁴ As the dispute with the Staff Association illustrates, Florence was adamant that the wage scale should not be altered for gendered reasons. In an incident where both issues of gender and pay intersected, Director of Staff Administration, William Pym, who Florence officially worked under until 1942, also stressed that TA(F)s were not filling women's roles. When the Corporation considered raising wages for clerical staff, the question arose over whether TA(F)s should also be given a raise in pay. Pym asserted that he:

. . . [saw] no justification for an increase in Women Operators' salaries. We pay them as J.M.E.s, not as women. Young men if they were available for the jobs would be paid at the same rates. The fact that a rise in the market price of high grade clerical staff is forcing us to raise salaries there cannot in my opinion be allowed to affect the rates of pay for an entirely unrelated class of labour. We are having no difficulty in recruiting [Technical Assistants] at our present rates.⁴⁵

When TA(F)s started to move into more responsible, higher-paying jobs, promotion opportunities and standards also ignited disputes amongst themselves. Promotion to the Programme Engineer ranks in the Studios came with a substantial pay rise – their wages increasing by thirty percent.⁴⁶ Women began to dispute appointment selections and the management teams began to worry that there would be a barrage of applications for any PE posts. The EiC of the London Control Room, Cecil Bottle, indicated that two of his female staff members had separately discussed promotion prospects and unequal pay rates between TAs and PEs for jobs they considered to be roughly equivalent. Although Bottle acknowledged that one of those complaining was disgruntled for having been passed up for promotion, he agreed in principle that the TAs deserved the same consideration, and

⁴² Memo, 27-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid*. One anomaly seemed to be that over the age of twenty-two, JMEs were paid more than TA(F)s. This was probably due to the fact that any JME that was 23 would have already been in BBC Service, and women over 22 were coming in at entry level. Letter, 23-Apr-42, EEO to Ledward, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁴³ Letter, 22-Jun-41, Buss to DSA; 9-Jul-41, EEO to Secretary, BBC Staff Association, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; Letter, 23-Apr-42, EEO to Ledward, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁴⁴ Memo, 27-Oct-41, EEO to DSA, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁴⁵ Memo, 6-Nov-41, DSA to C(A), *ibid*. In the original memo the term Woman Operators was used. This has been changed for clarity. The job title changed to Technical Assistant the following year.

⁴⁶ Memo, 3-Sep-41, SE(S) to SSE, *ibid*.

pay, as PEs.⁴⁷ Similar questions arose over pay differentials in the Recorded Programmes Department and will be discussed below.

These pay and promotion disputes coincided with the BBC's reorganisation which occurred in 1942. Therefore, the decision to combine the position of Junior Maintenance Engineer and Women Operator into the generic role of Technical Assistant may have resulted from either the reorganisation or an attempt to equalise pay grades. Later in the war, TAs were reorganised into two levels instead of one, creating an avenue for an intermediate promotion. From November 1942, both male and female trainees were given the title of TA Class II upon the successful completion of the training school and were eligible for promotion to TA Class I twelve months after their training was complete.⁴⁸ Although this change did not completely satisfy concerns over promotion and pay from both female and male TAs, the merger of Women Operators and Junior Maintenance Engineers into the same post did appear to diminish the issue.

The amalgamation of two gendered categories into one ostensibly gender-neutral post also expanded the potential of women to advance within the organisation. Even though the opportunity to advance might be limited by educational advancement and restrictions of on-the-job experience, Wynn had already announced that all women TAs were eligible to apply for promotion to the rank of Maintenance Engineer.⁴⁹ The process included a written and oral examination which had the appearance of neutrality. In practice, the Engineering Division acknowledged in internal memos that they were not as encouraging as they could be towards female staff. In discussing older women workers at Morrison's aircraft component factory, Sue Bruley intimated that women were classified with young male workers and could never progress beyond this level, unlike the boys who performed similar tasks who could expect to rise in the ranks.⁵⁰ As noted in Chapter Four, women were recruited at a higher age than their male counterparts, and boys as young as fifteen were also hired (see page 121). Therefore, an eighteen-year-old male could have up to three more years of on-the-job experience, and as a result could be eligible for promotion much quicker than women. One EiC threatened not to promote any TA(F)s to TA Class I until one of his TA(M)s was promoted. The TA(M) in question had joined as a YT in 1941 and already had two years' experience in the Engineering Division.⁵¹ Florence's response

⁴⁷ Memo, 22-Jul-42, EiC London to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁴⁸ Memo, 25-Sep-42, EEO to Secretary, Establishment Control; Extract from Establishment Control Meeting #28, 1-Oct-43, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

⁴⁹ Memo, 31-Mar-42, SSE to SE(T), SE(S) & SE(R), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁵⁰ Bruley, "A New Perspective on Women Workers " 224.

⁵¹ Memo, 28-May-43, EiC Tatsfield to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

to the situation was to remind EiCs that promotion to TA Class one was only to be considered once the EiC determined the staff member was ready for promotion.⁵² Although promotion was subject to individual discretion, this was still an improvement over the situation of women at Morrison's. When reviewing departmental statistics for a report to the Royal Commission on Equal Pay, Pym indicated that in 1944 only one percent of TA(F)s were promoted to a higher grade as compared to four percent of TA(M)s.⁵³

By February 1945, 571 women were serving as TA(F)s.⁵⁴ The *1946 BBC Yearbook* indicated that over 900 women were employed in the Engineering Division, roughly twenty-five percent of the Division staff, suggesting that close to 400 more women were working in positions as PEs or had achieved a higher grade level.⁵⁵ As the Corporation moved into the post-war era, a new examination regimen for promotion was introduced, something Harold Bishop had insisted should not be instituted during the war years.⁵⁶ The Grade D and Grade C- examinations were introduced to provide a pathway for promotion from the weekly-paid TA post to monthly-paid engineering posts. The Grade C- examination required attendance at a three-month course, passing a two-part written section, and passing an additional oral exam. Permission to take the course was at the discretion of the candidate's superiors. This affected both female and male technicians. However, it was not until 1952 that a woman was accepted onto and passed the Grade C- course.⁵⁷

TECHNICAL RECORDING SECTION

When Ashbridge finally acceded to hiring female operators, he did so on the firm understanding that they would only be filling roles in the Technical Recording Section of O&M, as well as in the studio centres and their associated control rooms. Women filling posts on transmitters had been explicitly ruled out.⁵⁸ Work in the Technical Recording Section was deemed appropriate perhaps as it was conducted in studio centres where male and female staff already worked alongside each other.⁵⁹ The job duties included recording on various types of media – discs, steel tape, and a film medium. TAs needed to test the equipment before recording, change and monitor the recording styluses, monitor and adjust the sound levels, and make edits when necessary. The recording capacity of the various

⁵² Memo, 16-Jun-43, EEO to SSE, *ibid.*

⁵³ Memo, 3-Feb-44, HSA to DDG, "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women."

⁵⁴ Memo, 24-May-44, Barraclough to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants." This number does not include any women who had been promoted above the Technical Assistant level.

⁵⁵ *The BBC Year Book 1946*, (London: The British Broadcasting Corporation, 1946), 95.

⁵⁶ Memo, 1-Sep-43, AC(E) to HRD & HLD, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

⁵⁷ H. Harris, "Edelstein Cross Examination," *Staff Association Bulletin*, May-June 1949, 33; "Photo," *ibid.*, April 1953, 34.

⁵⁸ Memo, 3-Apr-41, EEO to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁵⁹ Memo, 4-Sep-40, SE(S) to SSE, *ibid.*

media ranged from between twelve minutes and thirty minutes. As a result, TAs were also required to ensure smooth transitions between multiple discs or tapes needed for programmes that exceeded these limits in addition to making precise log notes for each recording.⁶⁰

Despite the positive assessment of the suitability of recording duties for female staff, there were some concerns over the physicality required for the position, especially as steel-tape reels were both heavy and awkward to handle (Figure 5.2). These fears were quickly dispelled when the first few groups demonstrated that these limitations could be overcome through practice. Women received praise particularly for the speed with which they learned to record with disc machines and with film.⁶¹ The Technical Recording training supervisor, James W. Godfrey, indicated that he fully expected that women would excel in this particular skill, and perhaps surpass men in their ability. This assessment was based on his observation that “. . . they [had] a more delicate sense of touch.”⁶² Although the idea that women had a delicate touch and sensitive fingers was a trope that featured in wartime stories of women workers, this assessment about disc recording was an idea that endured. During an interview for this project in 2015, a former wartime TA(M) John Philips echoed this same sentiment when discussing women's proficiency with recording equipment.⁶³

⁶⁰ Lawson, "Memories: Mary Lawson". Sapphire styluses were used for film and disc recording. The film medium was a coated strip that was grooved with the stylus and required no developing. Both the steel tape and the film could be edited. The steel with a special spot-welding device and the film with other pieces of film.

⁶¹ Memo, 22-Aug-41, Godfrey to SE(R), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁶² Ibid.

⁶³ Phillips, interview.

FIGURE 5.1: JOHN PHILLIPS DEMONSTRATING DISC RECORDER



Godfrey's initial report on the progress of women trainees indicated that he was optimistic that women would be more than adequate replacements for male staff. He only registered two concerns regarding new female staff. The first was that women might not be allowed the practical experience once they reached their final postings, forcefully stating ". . . that all [women] trainees must be given the opportunity to gain as much practical experience as local conditions would allow."⁶⁴ The second concern was that women's clothing might be unsuited for conditions in the recording studios, due to the inherent messiness of the working conditions and tasks, which often required kneeling on the floor. Godfrey reported that he did not have an opinion on the appropriateness of women wearing slacks or overalls, but added that the female trainees had indicated that they were in favour of wearing slacks.⁶⁵ Both Wynn and Martin Pulling, the head of the Recording Section, were inclined to allow women to wear slacks or overalls.⁶⁶

During the course of the war, one significant matter that arose from the Technical Recording Section was the issue of pay and promotion. A mere four months after women began work in the Technical Recording Section, Pulling registered that several female staff members had approached him regarding their rates of pay. The dispute concerned the work and remuneration of Recorded Programme Assistants (RPAs) who worked with the TAs. RPAs were graded at a different level and received nearly double the pay of the TAs.⁶⁷ However, TAs were prohibited from applying for RPA positions as it would entail transferring

⁶⁴ Memo, 22-Aug-41, Godfrey to SE(R), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Memo, 28-Aug-41, SE(R) to Godfrey, *ibid.*

⁶⁷ Memo, 13-Dec-41, SE(R) to SSE, *ibid.*

to another Division. The issue was escalated through the chain of command to the Deputy Directory-General Cecil Graves.⁶⁸ Although no specific ruling appeared to have been issued at the time, the question of Engineering staff assuming Recorded Programme Assistant positions re-emerged in August 1943. At that time Wynn banned the transfer of five TAs, four women and one man, to the London Recording Unit, noting that he regretted denying them opportunity to compete for a higher paying position. Wynn worried that the decision would promote discontent in the Technical Recording Section, but consoled himself that “. . . these people are all more use to the service as Recording T.A.s than they would be as newcomer Recorded Programme Assistants.”⁶⁹ Wynn’s refusal was reminiscent of an earlier dispute between the Overseas Services Division and the Engineering Division over the possible transfer of PEs discussed in Chapter Four (see page 114). The decision to refuse the transfer the TAs was possibly borne out of this dispute.

During the war, women were hired for positions within the Recorded Programmes Department, including jobs as Recorded Programme Assistants and Programme Reporters. Recorded Programme Assistants selected and particular recordings for editing and archiving, built up the sound effects archives, and assisted in gathering actualities. The duties were very similar to those carried out in Technical Recording, although RPAs were also given a responsibility for selection of material.⁷⁰ Programme Reporters listened to programme output and reported on technical problems and content issues.⁷¹ Unlike TAs in the Technical Recording Section, the Recorded Programme Assistants and Programme Reporters did not physically assemble or edit the recorded material.⁷² Programme Reporter Doreen Copeland joined the BBC in 1940 initially as a Clerk in the General Office and was scheduled to become a Women’s Staff Officer when the position was eliminated with the 1942 reorganisation. By 1943 Copeland had joined Recorded Programmes as a Recorded Programme Assistant, but eventually became a Programme Reporter – a job she preferred.⁷³ As Copeland worked outside the Engineering Division, there seemed to be no problem with her transfer to Recorded Programmes, although her redundancy may have also affected the move. Denise Tate first worked on an H Transmitter, which will be discuss below, when she joined the service in 1944. From there she transferred to the London Recording Unit at the end of the war, and eventually became a Programme Reporter.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ Memo, 20-Dec-41, SSE to C(E), *ibid*.

⁶⁹ Memo, 6-Aug-43, SSE to AC(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

⁷⁰ Arthur Phillips: BBC Memories 1929-1974, 18 March 1987, 60:48, reporter John, Lane, http://www.bbc.co.uk/archive/archive_pioneers/6503.shtml

⁷¹ John Temple, "B.B.C.'S "Secret Service"," *Radio Pictorial*, 30 June 1939, 7.

⁷² Memo, 13-Dec-41, SE(R) to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁷³ Annual Review 1944, "Left Staff, Copeland, Doreen Lillian," (BBC WAC L2/1511/1, 1940).

⁷⁴ Meekums, interview.

FIGURE 5.2 WOMEN OPERATORS RECEIVING INSTRUCTION IN THE USE OF A STEEL-TAPE RECORDING MACHINE⁷⁵



STUDIOS

I don't think, however, we can go on making a case for the retention of J.P.E.s. All these lads are extremely skilled in the work they do and their knowledge of our methods is a convenience to producers but I think the time has come when we should let them go and replace them with either men over military age or disabled or with girls.⁷⁶

The Studios Section of O&M included not only the regional studio centres, but also the London Control Room and associated studios. Similar to the Technical Recording Section, women were initially considered eminently suitable for these roles, although the nature of these qualities was unclear.⁷⁷ By July 1943, the Studios Section employed 182 TA(F)s, with an additional twenty-two acting as JPEs. In comparison at the same point in time, Recording had only forty-seven TA(F)s.⁷⁸ Fearing a ferocious bombing campaign at the outset of the war, several BBC Production Departments had been evacuated to regional studio centres. Bristol welcomed the Music Department, and the Variety Department was sent to Bangor in Wales.⁷⁹ Chadder's first impulse had been to limit women's work to established studio

⁷⁵ *The BBC Handbook 1942*, 78a.

⁷⁶ Memo, 4-Sep-40, SE(S) to SSE; 27-Jul-40, SSE to SE(E), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."

⁷⁷ Memo, 4-Sep-40, SE(S) to SSE; List, c. Oct-40, author unknown, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁷⁸ Draft memo, 9-Jul-43, EWEA to AEEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

⁷⁹ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 26-27.

centres only, and to avoid utilising them in improvised studio settings. Chadder's rationale was:

. . . the main reason for employing engineers to look after this work is to ensure that we have someone capable of dealings as they arise. The activities of women operators, in my view, should be confined to routine operations in control rooms."⁸⁰

This limitation must have been quickly quashed as by late 1941 women at Bangor were operating in buildings as diverse as ex-chapels, stately homes, and cinemas, as well as travelling to Llandudno for transmitting special orchestral concerts.⁸¹

Control Rooms connected the London stations and the Regional Studio Centres, channelling programming in both directions. The London Control Room was a large, open room in the sub-basement of Broadcasting House. Banks of switches that resembled telephone switchboards allowed the Technical Assistants to patch programming to the appropriate locations. In the Regions the set-up was similar, with the exception that there was more incoming programming than outgoing. The TAs worked in small tight-knit groups over a three-shift rotations pattern, following a programming schedule (Figure 5.3). Mary Garratt indicated that her shift team consisted of TA(F)s, and likewise all Roy Hayward's shift-mates were TA(M)s.⁸² Working with the groups were two supervisory levels, the Control Room Engineer and the Senior Control Room Engineer, both of whom scrutinised the work of the TAs. Recalling her time in the London Control Room, Mary Garratt indicated that the Control Room Engineer stood behind the staff on shift, while the Senior Control Room Engineer's office was behind the Control Room Engineer, elevated one step with an extended glass window overlooking them all as if to emphasise his elevated status in the control room.⁸³

The London Control Room also operated a number of Continuity Suites that were also staffed by TAs. Continuity Suites were an idea first suggested by Wynn after a few embarrassing programme transitions, particularly the transition from a report on the death of King George V to a dance band concert, but these suites were not operational at Broadcasting House until 1941.⁸⁴ Mary Garratt noted that the Continuity Suites appeared in the London Control Room shortly after her arrival in 1941.⁸⁵ Although she described

⁸⁰ Advertisement, c. May-41; Memo, 12-Aug-41, SE(S) to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁸¹ Memo, 14-Aug-41, EEO to SE(S); 12-Nov-41, EEO to SE(S), *ibid.*; Garratt, interview.

⁸² Garratt, interview; Roy Hayward, "Roy Hayward Remembers Control Room Life in 1942/43," http://www.orbem.co.uk/cr62/cr62_5.htm. This separation is suggested by Figure 5.3, as the two groups are near each other, but not interacting.

⁸³ Garratt, interview.

⁸⁴ Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 123-124, 231. Pawley's description of when Broadcasting House began using Continuity Suites was vague. Interviewee Mary Garratt indicated that the suites were not yet operational when she began working in the London Control Room in late 1941.

⁸⁵ Garratt, interview.

some of her work as knob twiddling, the head of the London Control Room thought that the women TAs working in the Continuity Suites were doing tremendous work. He stated that:

. . . I maintain that for intelligence, judgment, zeal and general attention to duty in the main, the [TA(F)s] on my staff who, among other duties, control the whole output of the Home or Forces programmes in Continuity Suites, execute the moment to moment switching when necessary and carry through a whole shift of work successfully with all the thought and watchfulness which that entails, can say when they have finished that they have done a very good job of work.⁸⁶

FIGURE 5.3: TECHNICAL ASSISTANTS IN LONDON CONTROL ROOM⁸⁷



The Control Room work was more operational than technical. The operators were expected to strictly adhere to a time schedule, but once the programmes were in progress there were only monitoring tasks to perform. As a result, the job was routine in nature, and quickly became mundane. Garratt indicated that lucky TAs, such as herself, could be promoted from the Control Room to Programme Engineering. The PEs and their assistants, the JPEs, enjoyed greater responsibility for programmes. The PE controlled the microphone, added needed sound effects, and played back any recorded material needed for a broadcast.⁸⁸ The JPEs assisted with cuing up records, sound effects and other related tasks, and were eventually expected to assume the PE roles.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ Memo, 22-Jul-42, EiC London to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁸⁷ Hayward, "Roy Hayward Remembers Control Room Life in 1942/43".

⁸⁸ Garratt, interview.

⁸⁹ Ibid.; Letter, 28-Mar-41, EEO to Charles at MOI, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b."

As discussed in Chapter Four, the PEs and the JPEs positions within Engineering were ambiguous (see page 114). Most of them did not possess technical qualifications or degrees in engineering, but they did have a sophisticated understanding of the equipment and sound requirements.⁹⁰ For perhaps a variety of reasons, PE roles were seen as a job category that would be suited to women, especially those with a background in either music or drama. This musical knowledge was useful in reading musical scores, in order to know when variations in the music would require sound level adjustments.⁹¹ Garratt related that the only qualification that she had obtained before applying to work at the BBC in 1941 was a gold medal in dramatics from the London Academy of Dramatic Art. This medal, along with her experience in a Kingston-upon-Thames department store acting as a sort-of in-house disc jockey, most likely put her on a trajectory to becoming a Programme Engineer.⁹²

From the outset, TA(F)s were expected to take over the JPE and PE roles in the studios.⁹³ There was even considerable debate about whether they should assume the roles directly from the training school, or serve an initial one-month term in the London Control Room.⁹⁴ Florence was anxious to promote some of the TA(F)s to PE positions, but was concerned that a flood of applicants would follow if the positions were openly posted. Wynn agreed, and suggested candidates should be solicited from the EiCs at studio centres.⁹⁵ Promotion to PE roles was attractive not just due to the more interesting nature of the role, but due to the significant increase in pay the TA(F) received. PEs received £5.0.0 per week plus a 5/0 cost-of-living bonus, which was a significant jump from the TA(F) wage of £3.10.0 that Control Room staff earned.⁹⁶ Conversely, Junior Programme Engineers received a slightly lower wage than the TAs at £3.0.0.⁹⁷ However, this

⁹⁰ Memo, 16-May-40, FD to SSE; 19-Jun-40, EEO to SE(S); 24-Jul-40, SSE to SE(S); 28-Dec-40, SSE to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."; Memo, 4-Jan-41, EEO to SSE; 6-Jan-41, SSE to EEO, "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1b."

⁹¹ Memo, 24-Jul-40, SSE to SE(S), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 1a."; Memo, 21-Nov-41, Whiting to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."; Michael Marshall, "Meet the B.B.C.'S New B. And C. Boss," *Radio Pictorial*, 28 July 1939, 7; Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 116-117. There seemed to be a desire for Engineering to take control of these somewhat technical roles, but their lack of engineering qualifications put them on an unequal footing in Engineering. Florence may also have feared that if the BBC tried to classify these non-engineers as engineers then the relationship with the MOLNS could be jeopardised by a potential inspection. Florence might have also considered that it would be worth sacrificing a small number of JPEs in order to retain transmitter staff.

⁹² Garratt, interview.

⁹³ Memo, 3-Apr-41, EEO to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁹⁴ Memo, 4-Sep-41, EEO to SSE; 26-Oct-41, SSE to SE(S) through AC(E); 3-Nov-41, SSE to SE(S); 10-Nov-41, SE(S) to AC(E), SSE & EEO, *ibid*.

⁹⁵ Memo, 2-Mar-42, EEO to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁹⁶ Memo, 3-Sep-41, SE(S) to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

⁹⁷ Memo, 3-Sep-41, SE(S) to SSE, *ibid*.

discrepancy between the wages of control room operatives and studio PEs was an argument that undoubtedly predated the introduction of female technical staff in Engineering.

TRANSMITTERS

Florence's ability to fulfil his role as recruiter for Engineering was not an easy one. He met with continued resistance from within his own division over his plans to maintain wartime staffing levels. While women were accepted in recording studios, control rooms, and broadcast studios, moving women into transmitters was an incremental process. Florence seemed determined to overcome these restrictions and limitations that he labelled unnecessary, especially in wartime.⁹⁸ Although there are only hints indicating Florence's intentions, the techniques he employed to push the boundaries to allow women to fill a wider variety of roles appeared to be deliberate. After agreeing that women could be employed in operational jobs in control rooms and recording, Ashbridge further conceded that women could also work in the control rooms of the larger transmitters. This concession was gained before the first group of female trainees had completed their training, and was not therefore based on operational experience.⁹⁹ Florence immediately contacted Elise Sprott, the Public Relations Assistant for women's affairs, who was preparing an article on the new TA(F)s, to make her aware of this concession, and perhaps to get it immediately in print.¹⁰⁰ He also contacted Pym and noted: ". . . that after we have had experience of the work which the women operators undertake it will be possible to recommend their doing other duties at transmitting stations."¹⁰¹

At the start, women working on transmitters of any size were supposed to work in pairs, which prompted questions about what should happen if one was off sick or on leave. Should her partner be sent home as well, or should she carry on alone?¹⁰² Were women required to work all shifts, and should they receive pay differentials?¹⁰³ In each case, the EiCs were instructed to treat women staff the same as equivalent male staff members. They were to work all shifts, be paid on an equivalent basis, and were expected to carry on working even if they were the only woman on shift. Both Florence and Wynn worried that women would not be treated fairly, and reminded staff members to treat their female

⁹⁸ Memo, 16-Sep-41, EEO to C(E); 2-Oct-41, EEO to SE(T), *ibid.*; Memo, 2-Apr-42, EEO to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

⁹⁹ Memo, 26-Jun-41, EEO to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

¹⁰⁰ Memo, 26-Jun-41, EEO to Sprott, *ibid.* There was no indication in the file if the article was for a specific magazine or for a BBC publication. Efforts to locate articles published in the time frame have not been able to identify a specific article on the subject.

¹⁰¹ Memo, 26-Jun-41, EEO to DSA, *ibid.*

¹⁰² Memo, 15-Dec-41, EiC Bartley to EEO; 18-Dec-41, EEO to EiC Bartley, *ibid.*; Memo, 27-Jan-42, EiC Blackburn to EEO; 29-Jan-42, EiC Moorside Edge to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

¹⁰³ Memo, 18-Aug-41, EiC Edinburgh to EEO & HO; 26-Aug-41, EiC Glasgow to EEO; 6-Sep-41, EiC Birmingham to EE; 16-Sep-41, EEO to EiC Birmingham, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

colleagues with respect and to remember that these women were fulfilling a vital war service.¹⁰⁴ Whether or not this sentiment was wholeheartedly accepted, Florence wrote that, in his opinion, that most of the EiCs understood the need to use the female technicians, and appreciated the TA(F)s' efforts and professionalism.¹⁰⁵ Florence's assessment can be demonstrated by the positive assessments voiced by Cecil Bottle and James Godfrey noted above.

Despite these positive expressions, the women's presence at the transmitters did generate some hostility. The EiC at Droitwich, R.H. Humphreys, caused a minor furore when he boasted to his equivalents at other transmitters that he was only required to take on six TA(F)s. This boast was quickly quashed by the head of the Transmitter Section, Leslie Hotine, when it was pointed out that Droitwich would only be getting six women initially as that was all that were available. More women would certainly follow when enough had finished training. Humphreys further inflamed the wrath of Wynn when he indicated that he did not allow women to clean inside the equipment as their skirts kept getting stuck. It transpired that Humphreys had ruled that women were not allowed to wear trousers during day-time shifts. Wynn was furious that a local rule had been established without consultation, as he held that women should be allowed to wear trousers, of a quiet colour, on all shifts.¹⁰⁶

This story regarding restricting women's attire at the Droitwich Transmitter, especially the note regarding trouser colour, is a well-travelled story. Edward Pawley, a long-serving member of the BBC Engineering Division, mentioned the incident in his 1972 book *BBC Engineering*.¹⁰⁷ Doreen Tagholm referred to Pawley's description of the dispute in her oral history.¹⁰⁸ Pawley was impersonal about his role in the Recording Section in his book, but his discussion of the topic tried to emphasise that some in the Engineering Division used petty means to keep women from full participation. The BBC file and Pawley's account both indicate that the colour of the trousers was an aside, much like any employer would make about appropriate dress. Tagholm admitted that there were some "old diehards", but that overall the women were accepted and allowed to progress.¹⁰⁹

Despite these areas of friction, the male and female staff at the transmitters appeared to work in harmony. John Phillips reported that when he joined in 1943 as a TA,

¹⁰⁴ Memo, 26-Jul-41, SSE to All EiCs, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁵ Memo, 21-Oct-41, EEO to DSA; 3-Nov-41, EEO to C(A), "Staff Policy, Exemption of Engineers, File 2a."

¹⁰⁶ Memo, 23-Feb-42, SSE to SE(T), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

¹⁰⁷ Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 302.

¹⁰⁸ Nicholson, *What Did You Do in the War, Mummy?*, 190-191.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid*.

the TA(M)s and TA(F)s worked the positions in rotation without any differentiation, and that there was feeling of camaraderie among all staff. A typical shift would consist of about ten staff members, with approximately forty on the transmitter as a whole. Phillips estimated that women were a quarter of the staff – ten versus twenty-five to thirty men. There were four duty positions that were handled by the junior staff that were worked in turn.¹¹⁰

FIGURE 5.4: TECHNICAL ASSISTANT CHANGING A VALVE AT DAVENTRY¹¹¹



Although there were initially no jobs among the juniors that were gendered, Phillips indicated that sometime in 1945 a separate room was constructed at the Droitwich Transmitter. This was called the Lines Termination Room and was where all the GPO lines on which BBC programming was sent to the transmitters ended before being transmitted to the stations. Originally this function was situated in the Birmingham Control Room but had been moved to Droitwich over bombardment fears. Phillips stated that staffing this room eventually became a job specifically handled by women, although men would work relief duty. Two TA(F)s remained at Droitwich working in the Lines Transmission Room until 1947 when the function was transferred back to Birmingham.¹¹²

There were several types of high-power, large transmitters in operation – short-wave transmitters to broadcast overseas, and long- and medium-wave transmitters for domestic broadcasts. Long-wave and medium-wave transmitters like Droitwich and

¹¹⁰ Phillips, interview.

¹¹¹ Norman Shacklady and Martin Ellen, eds., *On Air: A History of BBC Transmission*, Online Edition ed. (Orpington: Wavechange Books, 2015), 70.

¹¹² Phillips, interview. Although I have been unable to identify any corroborating documentation, a staff list for the station dated 1 July 1947 provided by Phillips listed four women, Miss Davey, Miss Reynolds, Miss Jeffrey and Miss Turnham, who remained at Droitwich after the other TA(F)s had been redeployed.

Westerglen had different transmitting masts than the short-wave stations like Rampisham in Dorset. In addition to duties in the transmitter control room, the short-wave stations required manual adjustments to the transmitting aerials, often described as wave changing. Working in pairs, staff manually adjusted the outside aerials with a hook on a long wooden pole. The task was not physically taxing, but the potential to come into contact with lethal voltage required a second person for safety reasons.¹¹³ The aerial adjustments were needed to reach different areas across the globe, and to account for atmospheric conditions. Leslie Hotine, head of the Transmitter Section, was insistent that women be limited to control room duties only on short-wave transmitters and would, therefore, not have been required to move the aerials at the short-wave transmitters.¹¹⁴

Florence appealed to Noel Ashbridge and urged that women be used in all operational roles, as experience would result in more confident female staff.¹¹⁵ Whether Florence's appeal was successful is uncertain. Doreen Pout was directed by the MOLNS into the BBC and was sent to the Rampisham Transmitter in 1944, and indicated that she worked in the control room relaying programming overseas.¹¹⁶ Some sources indicated that women stationed at short-wave transmitters were not assigned to move the aerials.¹¹⁷ Although former BBC Engineer Bill Rhodes did not join the Corporation until the 1950s, wartime stories about TA(F)s at Rampisham were still in circulation when he joined – including an anecdote where a colleague and his female work partner decided to forego a scheduled aerial adjustment due to the cold weather.¹¹⁸ Variation of duties may have occurred at individual transmitters as the EiCs may have interpreted instructions from the Head Office differently. Therefore, women might not have been required to make aerial adjustments, but it is conceivable that they accompanied another staff member for health and safety reasons.

H-GROUP TRANSMITTERS

In addition to the larger transmitters, the BBC had set up sixty-one low-powered transmitters, designated H-Group Transmitters. Radio signals were excellent navigational aids, which would have been useful to German bombers. To counter this risk, the BBC had developed a complex system that diluted the signals in order to prevent them being used as beacons for bombers in the event of war. A side effect of the system was that some areas experienced signal drops during air raids. The H-Group Transmitters were intended

¹¹³ Ibid.; William Rhodes, 2014..

¹¹⁴ Memo, 29-Aug-41, SE(T) to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

¹¹⁵ Memo, 16-Sep-41, EEO to C(E), *ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Bouskill, interview.

¹¹⁷ Tomalin, *Daventry Calling*, 60.

¹¹⁸ Rhodes.

to boost the signal locally and were also intended for local broadcasts in the event of an invasion.¹¹⁹ The responsibilities of the transmitters were routine control room duties, but the locations of the transmitters were more problematic. Former TA Rita Jaye was first posted to an H-Group Transmitter in 1943. The transmitter was in the hamlet of Christmas Pie near Guildford in Surrey, in an underground facility denoted only by a pile of bricks in a field. She was also posted to a facility in Ipswich located under the town's swimming baths, and finally to a lodge on an estate in Berkshire.¹²⁰ Other H-Group locations included Shire Hall in Cambridge and a brickworks in Aberdare.¹²¹ Places with tall chimneys were used, as the landmark would act as an ersatz mast.¹²² Former TA Doreen Pout indicated that she worked in an H-Group Transmitter located in Exeter Cathedral that was damaged during the 1942 Baedeker bombings. Pout related that she and her colleague raised the new mast, a heavy job that demonstrated that women were not given light duties.¹²³

Placing women in H-Group Transmitters was a protracted affair. By the end of 1941, Ashbridge had agreed to allow TA(F)s to serve at the smaller studios and transmitter facilities, including H-Group, that had been previously excluded.¹²⁴ This reversal of policy perhaps started with the placing of women into roles at smaller transmitters under the guise of on-site training. After classroom training, Florence proposed that TA(F)s worked training shifts at transmitter facilities as near to their families as possible, even if women in general were not scheduled to be allocated to these locations.¹²⁵ The suggestion was made with an eye towards the future as Florence justified these extra assignments by stating that "[t]he staff position in twelve months (sic) time may be such that we have to use women anywhere where we at present use men."¹²⁶ Florence had been particularly keen to get approval for the placement of women at H-Group Transmitters, broaching the subject with Ashbridge in September 1941.¹²⁷ While he was successful in this quest, this success was tempered by a protracted debate about women's duties at the transmitters.

H-Group Transmitters normally only had two to three staff members on duty, an EiC or a Senior Maintenance Engineer, and two junior staff, either TAs or YTs. From internal documents, it is evident that the senior engineer was not present for all shifts. Two TA(F)s were assigned to each shift to ensure that they would not be working alone with a man.

¹¹⁹ Shacklady and Ellen, *On Air*, 8-9.

¹²⁰ Jaye, "Memories of Life at 'H' Group Transmitters by Rita Jaye, Nee Barnsley".

¹²¹ Memo, 23-Sep-41, SE(T) to EEO, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

¹²² Shacklady and Ellen, *On Air*, 9.

¹²³ Bouskill, interview; Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 244. pg 244

¹²⁴ Memo, 18-Sep-41, C(E) to EEO; 4-Dec-41, EEO to EiCs, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators."

¹²⁵ Memo, 7-Aug-41, EEO to SE(T), SE(S) & SE(R); 9-Aug-41, EEO to EiCs; 14-Aug-41, EEO to SE(S), *ibid.*

¹²⁶ Memo, 14-Aug-41, EEO to SE(S), *ibid.*

¹²⁷ Memo, 16-Sep-41, EEO to C(E), *ibid.*

When the question of illness and holidays arose, YTs were considered suitable replacements for TA(F)s even if it meant there was one woman on the station, presumably due to the age of YTs.¹²⁸ The danger of lone women working with adult men seemed to be the rationale behind prohibiting women staff at transmitters, even if they were cleaners.¹²⁹ If even a minor fault arose in the course of a shift, TA(F)s were initially instructed to shut down the transmitter and call a senior engineer in to rectify the problem. As the stations were often in remote locations, this procedure resulted in significant delays to resolve something as minor as a blown fuse. The rationale for this caution was the potential for women to come in to contact with lethal voltage.¹³⁰ Although they viewed the restrictions as somewhat harsh, both Wynn and Hotine felt that the restrictions would probably relax within a few months.¹³¹

As a compromise to the concerns expressed by Ashbridge, Wynn set a three- to six-month test period, at the end of which the restriction would be reconsidered.¹³² Florence continued to question this restriction as overly cautious, and he along with Assistant Controller of Engineering, Harold Bishop, thought that the restrictions were demoralising for the TA(F)s.¹³³ In late May 1942, Ashbridge appeared to have agreed to lift the ban on women effecting repairs.¹³⁴ However, three months later the ban was still in place, and was not due to be lifted until September.¹³⁵ The delay appears to have been related to an accident that had occurred a year earlier.

In 1941 a fatal incident occurred at a transmitter which contributed to concerns about safety and delayed the lifting of the ban. The files did not contain details about the nature of the accident, and any references to the incident did not appear in the press. What can be discerned was that a male engineer named R.W. Angell had died in service. Probate records indicated that a Ronald W. Angell died in March 1941 at the hospital in Barnet, which was a few miles from the Brookmans Park Transmitter. The 1939 England and Wales census indicated Ronald Walter Angell was an electrical engineer.¹³⁶ Although there was no cause of death listed, and if R.W. Angell was Ronald Walter Angell, the accident likely occurred close to or on 12 March 1941. His death may have been from a fall as engineers

¹²⁸ Memo, 6-Feb-42, EEO to EiC Blackburn, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Women Operators, File 2."

¹²⁹ Memo, 6-Feb-42, EEO to EiC Moorside Edge, *ibid*.

¹³⁰ Memo, 24-Mar-42, SSE to C(E), AC(E) & EEO; 27-Mar-42, SE(T) to EiCs;*ibid*.

¹³¹ Memo, 27-Mar-42, SE(T) to EEO, *ibid*.

¹³² Memo, 30-Mar-42, SSE to EEO; 23-May-42, SSE to AC(E); *ibid*.

¹³³ Memo, c. Mar-42, EEO to SSE; 1-Apr-42, EEO to SE(T); 2-Apr-42, EEO to SSE; 26-May-42, AC(E) to C(E), *ibid*.

¹³⁴ Memo, 28-May-42, SSE to SE(T) & EEO, *ibid*.

¹³⁵ Memo, 5-Aug-42, SSE to SE(T), *ibid*.

¹³⁶ Schedule 97, Enumeration District AXZD, "England and Wales Register," (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives of the UK, 1939); Probate date, 21-Mar-41, "Calendar of the Grants of Probate and Letters of Administration Made in the Probate Registries of the High Court of Justice in England," ed. Principal Probate Registry (London: Crown, 1858-1966).

were required to make repairs and adjustments on the transmitter masts, and a fall from a mast could be fatal. However, Angell might also have been electrocuted. Many of the dangers discussed for women working in pairs without supervisors present concerned the dangers of electricity. Based on the discussion the conclusion could be drawn that the death had been due to an electrical accident. However, the cause of death need not have been related in any way to working with electricity or at H-Group Transmitters and may have solely been an excuse not to allow women more responsible duties at H-Group Transmitters.¹³⁷

During this same period, the TA(F)s in the studios complained that they were unable to learn how to repair the equipment as specialist squads were assigned to the task, and the women were therefore denied the opportunity to improve their skills and advance on the job.¹³⁸ Florence commented that these complaints were echoed by women both within the BBC and across the country, although he did not provide specific examples. He strongly urged that the Division devolve more responsibility upon the TA(F)s.¹³⁹ In response, Wynn indicated that Ashbridge was unwilling to make any changes until a report on the Angell accident had been issued. Wynn also noted the frustration exhibited by the TA(F)s, and that one had made unauthorised repairs at an H-Group Transmitter when she had been unable to contact either the EiC or a Maintenance Engineer.¹⁴⁰ Rita Jaye also reported that some older engineers tried to undermine women's technical competency through criticism. Her colleague, Eva Hinds, one of the few women who had qualified as a Maintenance Engineer, was often set tasks with the seeming aim of tearing down her efforts. Jaye noted with glee that her colleague's work always stood up against this scrutiny.¹⁴¹

As the war progressed, the H-Group Transmitters were deemed less important and many of them were closed. In discussing his early days at the Droitwich Transmitter, John Phillips indicated that the H-Group Transmitters were mothballed in 1943, and its largely female staff was dispersed to other transmitters.¹⁴² By this time almost all of the H-Group staff members were TA(F)s. However, only half the H-Group Transmitters were closed by 1943, and the rest were still in operation through 1945, particularly in the southern coastal areas.¹⁴³ This was probably due to their strategic location. While stationed close to Ipswich

¹³⁷ Memo, 9-Sep-42, EEO to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹³⁸ Memo, 6-Sep-42, SSE to SE(S), *ibid*.

¹³⁹ Memo, 9-Sep-42, EEO to SSE, *ibid*.

¹⁴⁰ Memo, 10-Sep-42, SSE to EEO, *ibid*.

¹⁴¹ Jaye, "Memories of Life at 'H' Group Transmitters by Rita Jaye, Nee Barnsley".

¹⁴² Phillips, interview.

¹⁴³ Jaye, "Memories of Life at 'H' Group Transmitters by Rita Jaye, Nee Barnsley"; Shacklady and Ellen, *On Air*, 10.

near the Suffolk coast, Rita Jaye recalled the wave after wave of aircraft flying over her H-Group Transmitter on bombing raids.¹⁴⁴

That Phillips thought that all the transmitters were closed highlights another aspect of wartime BBC staffing. Staff members' experiences during the war were often isolated, and their understanding of what was happening in other areas of the organisation was limited. For Phillips this meant that an influx of staff to the Droitwich Transmitter of women from H-Group Transmitters indicated that they had been mothballed. Another BBC engineer interviewed for this thesis, Dick Craig, worked in Monitoring Engineering at Crowsley Park in Caversham. An isolated centre for receiving overseas broadcasts, Crowsley Park did not have any female TAs.¹⁴⁵ Craig additionally thought that the H-Group Transmitters on the coast did not have female staff. In his experience, women did not work at sensitive locations like Crowsley Park, and he extended this interpretation to the restricted travel areas along the coast. The question of using women in sensitive or secure areas was raised in 1942 by the MOI. The BBC affirmed that there were no ". . . special arrangements in terms of women for sabotage or security. They are treated the same as men in this regard."¹⁴⁶

CONCLUSIONS

The BBC Engineering Division travelled a long way during the course of the Second World War in its attitude towards hiring and deploying female technicians. Beginning from a position of unwillingness moving then to one of limited acceptance, Engineering management finally accepted women in a majority of roles, especially in the Operations & Maintenance Department. Broadcast engineering at the BBC was arguably already highly compartmentalised, allowing women to expand their reach into various O&M sections as the Division's hierarchy gained confidence in women's abilities and interest in the tasks at hand. Similar to many wartime industries, BBC Engineering approached wartime staff shortages with a recruitment strategy that focussed both on women and juvenile males below conscription age. Women TAs may have been slightly older than their male counterparts, but they were also able to achieve promotion beyond entry-level positions even if their younger male counterparts were advantaged by their earlier entry into BBC service. The Engineering Training School and the on-the-job training allowed women a unique opportunity to study and work in technical roles in broadcast engineering.

Despite the many positive aspects of women's performance in Engineering, there were hindrances to them succeeding on the job. Much of the scepticism on the part of BBC

¹⁴⁴ Jaye, "Memories of Life at 'H' Group Transmitters by Rita Jaye, Nee Barnsley".

¹⁴⁵ Phillips, interview; Richard Craig, interview by Kate Terkanian, 2015.

¹⁴⁶ Memo, 17-Nov-42, EEO to SSE, "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

managers lay in their doubts about the ability of women to grasp theory, but also the Corporation's unwillingness to provide outside opportunities to the TA(F)s to enhance their knowledge. The appreciation of their operational ability was never in doubt, and many BBC engineers recognised their skill. A letter in the BBC Staff Bulletin in 1948 from "Naperian" highlighted this disconnect. While noting that women challenged senior engineer's preconceptions about engineering, and some men were ". . . given a new experience in attaining a more fundamental approach to their art", the letter went on to note that women were being increasingly pushed out of technical positions, but suggested the Corporation owed ". . . more hope for a settled career to a section of its Staff without whom it would, at one time, have been difficult to carry on."¹⁴⁷ Women would gain some security in the post-war era, particularly in Programme Engineering, but in 1948 the Engineering Division answered Naperian's call by shedding Programme Engineering – a role it considered purely operational – back to its original home in the Programme Division.

¹⁴⁷ Naperian, "Women in Operations - 'Cool and Level-Headed'," *Staff Association Bulletin*, April 1948, 5.

Chapter Six NATIONALITY, SECURITY, AND COMPETITION

The Overseas Services Division and its separate departments and services developed rapidly during the war years. Among these were the language broadcasting services, the Overseas Services and the European Services, and the intelligence gathering section, the Monitoring Service. As the expansion occurred most acutely in language-dependent services, hiring non-British staff added an extra layer of complexity to recruitment efforts. The European Services split from the Overseas Services Division in 1942 and fell more directly under government oversight. However, the mechanisms and procedures for recruitment remained united across all three services. The speed of expansion, the need for individuals with specialised qualifications, and the recruitment of large numbers of non-British staff provide an avenue to explore how wartime conditions altered BBC recruitment practices and gendering of job categories. The question of nationality and birth would raise difficult questions of status especially for married women, as regulations governing nationality and citizenship often hinged on the nationality of a husband.

The following discussion will explore the development of BBC recruitment policy in the Overseas Services Division and allied Divisions and departments. This will include how relationships with the government ministries and questions of nationality and security allowed female staff to move into positions with enhanced responsibilities. The role that the employment of aliens, particularly enemy aliens, played in recruitment efforts will be considered. The chapter will also highlight how the BBC came into conflict and competition with government agencies for qualified linguists. Finally, the establishment of a children's hostel will be discussed as a special wartime concession that largely benefitted foreign female staff. Although the development of the different language services was an important aspect of the BBC during these years, this chapter's intended focus is on recruitment challenges faced rather than specific details regarding individual language services.

THE ORIGINS AND GROWTH OF LANGUAGE BROADCASTING AND MONITORING

Although many people in Britain had hoped to avoid hostilities, the outbreak of the Second World War was not unexpected. Long before the Munich crisis in September and October 1938, the BBC had been formulating plans and procedures for the increasingly likely war. Starting in earnest in 1934, these included formulating censorship protocols and policy, and guarding against sabotage by reinforcing security, especially near transmitters.¹ Vetting by the security service MI5 of personnel intended to be retained in the event of war

¹ Asa Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, vol. II, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* (London: Oxford University Press, 1965), 626-630.

began officially in 1937.² Propaganda considerations had also predated the Munich crisis. The Soviets, Germans, and Italians initiated radio broadcasts aimed at Britain or British colonies from the early 1930s.³ The BBC was reluctant to counter these efforts, partially due to concerns that such broadcasts would tarnish its reputation of independence.⁴ After the Italian station Radio Bari, which broadcast in Arabic to the Middle East, became tendentious in Palestine, the government asked the BBC to start its own Arabic language station. BBC Arabic broadcasts began in January 1938.⁵ Shortly thereafter in March 1938, the BBC started broadcasting in Spanish and Portuguese in South America to counter the expanding influence of German propaganda in the southern hemisphere.⁶ Broadcasts to Europe in German, Italian, and French did not begin until the Munich Crisis later in the year.⁷

The handful of language services that existed at the beginning of the war were part of the Overseas Department, which came under the bigger umbrella of the Programme Division. As broadcasts in foreign languages bloomed, and the Forces Programme was introduced, the formation of the Overseas Services Division was triggered in the summer of 1940, with Stephen Tallents as its new Controller (Figure 6.1). J.B. Clark served as his deputy. This new organisational structure would last less than two years. A few months before his departure in January 1942 Frederick Ogilvie announced that the European Services Division would split away from the Overseas Services Division. The reasons for the further division of these services was both external and internal. The MOI wanted greater control over propaganda to Europe, and the European Department wanted greater control over news and news talks. The MOI won the argument and Tallents was displaced in the process. Clark succeeded Tallents as Controller of the Overseas Services Division, and Ivone Kirkpatrick was moved from the MOI into the role of Controller of the European Services Division (Figure 6.2). The Overseas Services Division and the European Services Division were for the most part located in the London area, eventually based at 200 Oxford Street and Bush House, respectively.⁸ All of language testing for translation and announcing, and

² 1945 Report, Eleanor Shelmerdine Pym, "Formalities, General Correspondence (Excluding External Services)," (BBC WAC R154/11/2, 1943-1950).

³ Roger Manvell, *On the Air: A Study of Broadcasting in Sound and Television* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1953), 30; Callum A. MacDonald, "Radio Bari: Italian Wireless Propaganda in the Middle East and British Countermeasures 1934-38," *Middle Eastern Studies*, no. 2 (1977): 195.

⁴ Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, II, 398.

⁵ MacDonald, "Radio Bari," 197-203.

⁶ Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, II, 398, 406-398.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 645.

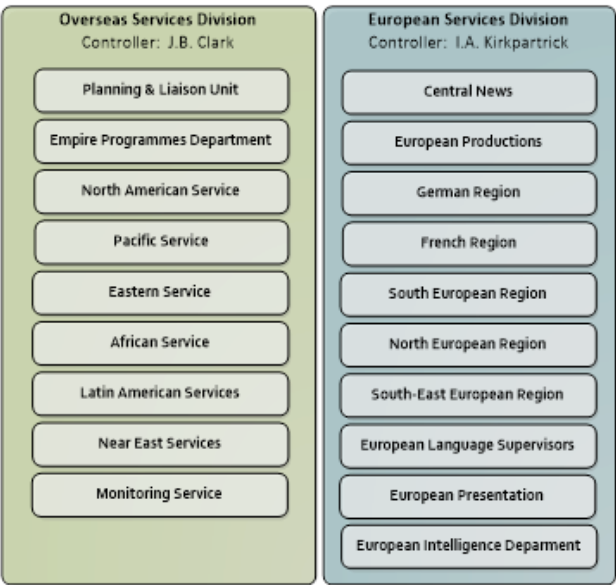
⁸ Gerald Mansell, *Let the Truth Be Told: 50 Years of BBC External Broadcasting* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1982), 81-84, 104, 112-117, . 81-84, 104, 112-17

security vetting, continued to be handled centrally through the Staff Administration Department.⁹

FIGURE 6.1: OVERSEAS SERVICES DIVISION¹⁰



FIGURE 6.2: 1942 REORGANISATION OF THE OVERSEAS SERVICES DIVISION¹¹



⁹ Memo, 11-Feb-42, Taylor to RD, "Staff Policy, Monitors, Selection Committee," (BBC WAC R49/410, 1939-1942); Memo, DATE, EurLS to DEurS, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 2." "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3a," (BBC WAC R49/11/3, 1940); Memo, 12-May-43, RO Overseas to NID, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, File 3," (BBC WAC R49/561/3, 1943-1944).

¹⁰ BBC Organisation 1939-1943, "Staff Policy, Organisation Charts, ," (BBC WAC R49/428, 1923-1955).

¹¹ "BBC Staff List," 28-40.

The Monitoring Service officially began in August 1939. However, monitoring of foreign radio broadcasts for intelligence purposes had earlier origins. The BBC language sections had been conducting their own informal monitoring and had hired a full-time clerk for this purpose in March 1939. During the same time period, David Hallett started the Institute of National Affairs in London, employing Mary Wilson and recent LSE graduate Bettie Knott. By the end of the summer the BBC's Richard Marriott had hired all three for the new BBC Monitoring Service.¹² Marriott had served under J.B. Clark in the Overseas Services Division as the Foreign Liaison Officer and was specifically selected by Cecil Graves to organise and run the unit.¹³ Just over a week before the war began the Monitoring Service left *en masse* and set up the service at Evesham in Worcestershire at a stately home, Wood Norton Hall.¹⁴ In the Spring of 1943, the Service reluctantly moved to Caversham Park near Reading, in Berkshire.

The task of the Monitoring Service was to listen for transmissions from any relevant nation – hostile, neutral, or allied. Monitoring included listening to all openly available internal domestic broadcasts, in addition to propaganda intended to influence outside nations. The information was then translated, condensed, and published in a magazine format – *The Monitoring Digest*. The first printed version appeared on 28 August 1939. By the end of 1939, an information bureau had been established to quickly disseminate crucial information obtained through monitoring. Later, direct links were established with government offices by teletype or transmitted over the phone.¹⁵ The compiling and publishing of the digest was completed solely by BBC staff, although outsourcing the printing operation was considered, but ultimately not adopted, in a 1942 move to reduce staff numbers. The editorial staff and the duplicating staff who printed the digest were largely female. Likewise, the teleprinter and telephone operators were also predominantly women.¹⁶

As an intelligence gathering service, the Monitoring Service seemed somewhat awkwardly placed within the BBC. However, in terms of technical expertise, the BBC was probably best equipped to handle the task. Monitoring included listening to any radio transmissions intended for a foreign domestic audience (M Unit), listening to English broadcasts from Axis sources (Y Unit), intercepting Morse code transmissions (Morse

¹² Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 14-19.

¹³ Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring " 81-82. Marriott was first appointed Head of the M Unit, rather than the Monitoring Service. The Director of the Monitoring Service was Malcolm Frost until 1940 when Marriott was named to succeed him.

¹⁴ Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 19-21.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 37-43.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 37-38; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 65-68; Memo, 23-May-43, C(OS) to DG Foot, "Staff Policy, Economy in Woman Power."

Monitoring), and monitoring a special German news wire service using a ticker-tape Hellschreiber device (H Unit).¹⁷ Despite the difficulties in co-ordinating and lifting restrictions on the movement of aliens in Worcestershire, staff enjoyed the working environment in Evesham. When the decision was made to transfer the operations closer to London, to Caversham near Reading, a minor insurrection followed and several staff members quit the BBC in protest.¹⁸ The MOLNS was equally appalled, as the Reading area was both a difficult area for recruitment and chronically short of billets.¹⁹ The BBC would solve accommodation problems through the establishment of hostels, which will be detailed below. Some time after the war, it was revealed that the move to Caversham was made for security reasons. Wood Norton had been designated as an alternate base for the BBC Home Service in case of invasion. However, this information was tightly controlled at the time and was not divulged to staff even when staffing losses of key personnel resulted.²⁰

RECRUITMENT POLICY AND THE SEARCH FOR LANGUAGE SPECIALISTS

From the start, the Monitoring Service and the European language services required heavy administrative support to recruit and retain personnel. This was largely due to the need to employ non-British staff for language broadcasts and translation. As Hilary Footitt and Simona Tobia have documented in their book *War Talk: Foreign Languages and the British War Effort in Europe, 1940-47*, the shortage of qualified British linguists was rooted in a lack of foreign language training in the pre-war school system. Only elite institutions consistently offered language training, which was modelled on the academic study of classical Latin and Greek. Footitt and Tobia stressed that written comprehension was prized over spoken fluency, as speaking the language was deemed a non-academic, 'feminine' pursuit. Those who did study European languages were not required to spend a period learning the language abroad. Finally, they noted that even when the continental languages were studied, the emphasis was on literature of the nineteenth century, providing little knowledge about contemporary culture.²¹ For the BBC, this quest for contemporary cultural understanding also led to preferment of newly arrived immigrants over those with long-term roots in the UK.²² BBC staff member Elizabeth Barker was a rare example of someone who had a grasp not just of foreign languages, but also of the current political climate in other European countries. Barker, who lived and travelled in Austria for several years in

¹⁷ Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring " 92-102.

¹⁸ Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 123; Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 330-331.

¹⁹ Memo, 24-Mar-43, AppO to DG Foot, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

²⁰ Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 123.

²¹ Footitt and Tobia, *War Talk*, 16-23.

²² Minute Sheet, 20-May-39, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

the interwar period, moved out of the BBC service into intelligence work not long after the war was under way.²³

This is not to say that language proficiency was the only reason that the BBC turned to hiring foreign staff. Pressures from both the labour market and the government hampered the ability of the Corporation to hire qualified British subjects and will be discussed more fully in the next section. The terms of the 1923 licence between the Postmaster General (PMG) and the then British Broadcasting Company strictly prohibited hiring non-British subjects without prior consent.²⁴ This clause was also included in the 1927 Licence²⁵ and the 1937 renewal.²⁶ Obtaining consent was not impossible but required a significant amount of administrative time. As a result, especially in the early stages of the war, the Corporation persistently tried to prioritise hiring British subjects, both native-born and naturalised.²⁷ Unlike the Monitoring and European Services, the Overseas Services had fewer difficulties in this regard. Staff from the colonies or the Dominions did not need visas to work in the United Kingdom and were not subject to the same restrictions.

Amid the growing certainty of war, the BBC was also undergoing its Charter renewal. The findings and recommendations of the Ullswater Committee reflected concerns both on staffing and recruitment issues, as well as foreign-language broadcasting. The consultation period started in 1934, just as the BBC was simultaneously commissioning Professor Ernest Barker and ex-Civil Servant D.B. Mair to assess its recruitment practices.²⁸ In the final report recommending Charter renewal, the Ullswater Report, significant space was given towards the Corporation's policy on advertising job openings, and the findings of Barker and Mair. The number of staff members who had attended Oxford and Cambridge Universities, the formation of a staff association, the number of female and male employees, and the wage scales at all levels were given prominence. The Ullswater Committee was pleased that its suspicion that the Corporation gave preference to Oxford and Cambridge graduates was

²³ Barker, interview.

²⁴ "Wireless Broadcasting Licence," ed. Post Office Telegraphs (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1923), 7.

²⁵ "Wireless Broadcasting ", ed. Post Office Telegraphs (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1926), 16.

²⁶ "Broadcasting," ed. Post Office Telegraphs (London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 1936), 19.

²⁷ Letter, 4-Jul-39, Hort to HO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 2," (BBC WAC R49/11/2, 1939); Memo, 17-Dec-40, AGE0 to C(O), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b," (BBC WAC R49/11/4, 1940-1941).

²⁸ Report on the Recruitment of the Staff of the British Broadcasting Corporation, 8-Feb-34, "Staff Policy, Appointments Procedure, File 1," (BBC WAC R49/31/1, 1925-1939); "Broadcasting Policy: Revision of the B.B.C. Charter," (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives of the UK, 1934-1936). The first documents in the Charter Revision file date to February 1934. The report by Barker and Mair was commissioned by the Board of Governors in early 1934 and makes specific reference to the authority of the Governors granted by the charter and compares BBC practice to Civil Service Practice.

not, in their opinion, confirmed. Out of 191 monthly-paid non-Engineering staff with degrees, only seventy-six graduated from Oxford and forty from Cambridge. A further 204 had no degree at all. The Civil Service recommended that selection panels for the upper grades include a member of the Civil Service, and possibly an outside expert. The proportion of female and male staff was deemed adequate, with positions being awarded fairly on individual merit.²⁹

The other major recommendation made in the Ullswater Report was that the BBC expand its Empire Service in English and its language broadcasts. The report indicated that the government was willing to allocate additional funds from the license fee for this purpose.³⁰ This suggestion could be read as a prod to a BBC reluctant to expand into foreign language broadcasting. Cecil Graves, who was Controller of Programmes at that time, was resisting government efforts to start the Arabic Service during the period when the Ullswater Committee was reviewing the BBC's application for Charter renewal.³¹ In a memorandum prepared by the PMG George Tryon, a linkage was made between financing for the newly-established television service and the recommendations for expanding language services. Tryon noted that:

The Committee attach great importance to the development of Empire broadcasting and recommend that in future it should be regarded as an important normal function of the broadcasting organisation and that this service as well as television broadcasting should be expressly authorised in the new Charter. Moreover, the appropriate use of languages other than English is contemplated. The additional funds required for the development of Empire broadcasting will be provided by the Corporation from its increased share of the licence revenue. The finance of television broadcasting, on the other hand, is to be re-examined in the autumn of this year in the light of experience which will then be available, and can then be considered in consultation with the Treasury as explained above.³²

As the BBC finally agreed to launch an Arabic Service and a Latin American Service in Spanish and Portuguese in late 1937, the coupling of funding for the Empire Service with the expansion of language broadcasting, and a linkage between this expansion and that of the television service, may have played a role in the decision to begin foreign-language broadcasts. Although the Ullswater Report discussed employment policy, no mention was made regarding potential concessions needed to hire foreign staff for the proposed language broadcasts.

²⁹ "Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935," 12-15.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 35-37.

³¹ MacDonald, "Radio Bari," 200-203; Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, II, 343-355.

³² Memorandum, 5-Mar-36, George Tryon, PMG, "Broadcasting Policy: Revision of the B.B.C. Charter."

Although the newly established languages services tended to be staffed with more male employees, women were hired as well. The Arabic Service employed two women for on-air roles related to a series of programmes intended for a female audience.³³ Concern over the role of these women must have arisen, as the Director of the Overseas Services assured a committee on 14 December 1938 that the role was more extensive than just introducing the programme.³⁴ A further clarification was issued at the next committee meeting that the women would be described as Readers and not Announcers.³⁵ The names of these women, or any requests for work permits, do not appear in the files dealing with alien staff. It is probable that they were either British subjects and not subject to any administrative procedures other than security review, or that their employment was based on an *ad hoc* contributor programme contract.

One of the first non-British female employees was German-born Gabriele Mode who worked as a filing clerk in the Registry Office.³⁶ By 1940 Mode was serving as a Clerk in Latin American Intelligence.³⁷ Mode may have had a more important role than her title suggested. When the Home Office questioned how a filing clerk could be conducting matters of "first class national importance", the BBC responded that she was "... absolutely essential in the intelligence side".³⁸ Another early foreign female staff member, Mrs. Elisabeth Gundalf, was hired as a relief Translator for the German Service in October 1938.³⁹ Over the summer of 1939 and during the first few months of the war, the BBC began hiring women both as translators and typists with increasing frequency.⁴⁰

The gender and grade of staff members are difficult to determine from remaining documents. Lists of alien staff members included only those employees who needed registration certificates. This would not have included women who had gained citizenship through marriage or naturalisation. The Staff List for 1942 for the language services within the Overseas and European Services Divisions and the Monitoring Service includes only senior staff members, making it difficult to determine the number and job titles of women across those services.⁴¹ In a December 1941 list of weekly-paid staff, twenty women

³³ Arabic Programme Meeting Minutes, 9-Nov-38, 23-Nov-38 & 7-Dec-38, "Foreign General, Arabic Programme Meetings, File 1a," (BBC WAC E2/38/1, 1938-1951).

³⁴ Arabic Programme Meeting Minutes, 14-Dec-38, *ibid*.

³⁵ Arabic Programme Committee Meeting Minutes, 21-Dec-38, *ibid*.

³⁶ Letter, 23-Jun-38, GEO to Home Office, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 1," (BBC WAC R49/11/1, 1937-1939); Memo, 5-Dec-39, Miss Cockle to GEO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 2."

³⁷ Memo, 19-Jan-43, Shelmerdine to AppO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4," (BBC WAC R49/11/5, 1942-1943).

³⁸ Memo, 17-Dec-40, AGE0 to C(O), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

³⁹ Letter, 26-Oct-38, Hort to HO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 1."

⁴⁰ See generally, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 2."

⁴¹ "BBC Staff List," 34.

between the ages of twenty and thirty were noted as serving as Monitors, with no indication of their nationality. As English-language Monitors were weekly-paid posts and were all women, it is likely that these twenty women were English-language Monitors.⁴² English Monitors held lower ranking posts because additional language skills were not required. The 1941 list was restricted to those affected by the Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order and did not include monthly-paid staff.⁴³ Non-British women were not subject to labour conscription nor direction, and therefore would not have been included either. The two women staff members who transferred from the Institute of National Affairs to the new BBC Monitoring Service, Mary Wilson, and Bettie Knott, were both quickly promoted, with Knott rising to become Assistant Head of the mixed staff M Unit and Wilson being appointed Senior Monitoring Supervisor.⁴⁴

Although women with language skills predominated in the Language Typist grade, and men in Monitoring, both job categories were not exclusively single-sexed. Monitors needed to be at least bilingual, with fluent English, whereas typists' written English was a priority.⁴⁵ In some cases, Monitors served as their own typists. From the outset, the Arabic Service employed men as typists.⁴⁶ In 1941, female and male News Typists were hired for the Yugoslavian Service,⁴⁷ and Announcer/Translator Kurt Neuberger had originally been hired as a Language Typist.⁴⁸ A 1943 list of German- and Austrian-born personnel under the age of forty-five indicated that fifty-two out of 117 were women. The men tended to be older, only nineteen (29%) were aged thirty or younger and appeared to hold higher status positions. Contrastingly, women were overwhelmingly under thirty years of age, thirty-five out of fifty-two (67%), and held a higher number of clerical posts (Table 6.1).⁴⁹ However, women also filled senior roles normally held by men. Not only had Mrs. Olga Katerina Bolz become a Sub-Editor, a position that the BBC had indicted in early 1940 was reserved for men only,⁵⁰ but by March 1942 she had been promoted to Senior Sub-Editor and had been declared indispensable by the Monitoring Service.⁵¹ Bolz, a journalist who had travelled to Spain in 1935 to cover the Civil War, was British-born, but her marriage to

⁴² Report on Recruitment of Weekly-Paid Staff, 16-May-42, Section 2, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Reorganisation."; Todd, *Snakes and Ladders*, 195-197.

⁴³ Memo, 28-Jan-42, AWEO to DDSA, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1a," (BBC WAC R49/941/1, 1939).

⁴⁴ Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 22-23; "BBC Staff List," 34.

⁴⁵ Minute Sheet, 29-May-39, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

⁴⁶ "BBC Staff List," 14-15.

⁴⁷ Memo, 4-Apr-41, Cockle to OEO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

⁴⁸ Memo, 23-Jan-42, SEEurMgr to DEurO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

⁴⁹ Memos, 19-Jan-43, Shelmerdine to AppO; 16-Feb-43, AppO to DEurO, *ibid*.

⁵⁰ Report, circa Feb-40, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

⁵¹ Memo, 24-Apr-41, MSeX to Chesterton, "Staff Policy, Monitors, Selection Committee."; Memo, 25-Mar-42, MSeX to AOEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b," (BBC WAC R49/941/2, 1942).

an Austrian national in 1938 had changed her citizenship status. She successfully petitioned to have her British nationality restored in 1941.⁵²

TABLE 6.1: GERMAN- AND AUSTRIAN-BORN STAFF AS OF DECEMBER 1942⁵³

Position	Female	Male
Announcer/Translator	1	20
Translator	1	2
Dictation Typist	1	0
Empire Contributor	0	1
Producer	0	2
Index Clerk	1	0
Intelligence Assistant	0	1
Language typist	1	0
Monitor [†]	7	27
Monitoring Supervisor	0	2
Monitoring Typist	2	0
Overseas Clerk	1	0
Programme Assistant	0	9
Programme Engineer	0	1
Reference Clerk	1	0
Secretary	9	0
Teleprinter Operator	2	0
Teleprinter Typist	1	0
Transcriber Clerk	9	0
Typist*	13	0
Waitress	2	0
Total	52	65

[†]50% (4) female Monitors under 30 and 44% (12) male Monitors under 30

*Three typists in non-language roles

Recruitment and optimisation of staff would become crucial especially in the years between 1940 and 1944. Government, military, and industrial demands put pressure on an already tight labour market, and the BBC often found itself at odds with the government about their priority in the war effort. The next three sections will look at the BBC's relationship with government ministries that controlled the Corporation's ability to recruit and retain staff, the security systems that were put in place to ensure the loyalty of the staff

⁵² Personal Communication with Tim Boyd, 16 July 2018.

⁵³ Memos, 19-Jan-43, Shelmerdine to AppO; 16-Feb--43, AppO to DEurO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

the BBC hired, and the recruitment difficulties that emerged when the BBC came into competition for staff with government agencies. The government and the military were also desperately hiring British subjects with language skills, and women in the eighteen to thirty age range were sought after by all organisations concerned with intelligence and propaganda.⁵⁴ The BBC's attempts to utilise and retain both alien and female staff affected the opportunities available to female staff.

COORDINATION WITH THE GOVERNMENT

The Overseas Services Division's relationship with government ministries, like other BBC Divisions, varied between rationally cooperative and excruciatingly tense. This fluctuation in relations was an inevitable result of competing demands, and the unpredictable course of the war. However, the overall relationship between MOLNS and the Corporation was more often fractious. Early in the war, the BBC planned for the Home Service to shrink, with some growth anticipated in the then-Overseas Department that included the Empire Service and a handful of language services. A.P. Ryan, then-Assistant Controller of Public Relations, indicated that the Linguistic Section and the Central Register of Aliens would be the most useful branches of the MOLNS to the Corporation. From the start, Ryan wanted high-quality broadcasters who were not "long-term expats"; Monitors would also be required to have excellent linguistic skills, but not to the level of broadcasters.⁵⁵ In retrospect these arrangements appear naïve, but the value of broadcasting to the war effort was not fully realised at the time.

Less than a year later the MOLNS was bristling at what they perceived as the BBC's disregard of procedure. As the Ministry was supplying candidates from a central register, the officials saw no reason for the BBC to advertise. By September 1940, there was the general sense that the BBC's requests for candidates were not descriptive enough, and that the Corporation was slow to inform the MOLNS if any of those they referred were later employed. The BBC had also retained MOLNS paperwork even after repeated prompts for its return. The daunting task before the MOLNS was the replacement of previously deferred BBC staff who were now being called-up for military service.⁵⁶ By this point France, Belgium, and the Netherlands had been occupied and additional language services had sprung up in their wake. Although the MOLNS thought they could provide a good field of candidates for many of the current vacancies, there were no candidates available for positions requiring

⁵⁴ Footitt and Tobia, *War Talk*, 39-45; Smith, *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park* 18, 46, 55-57.

⁵⁵ Minute Sheet, 20-May-39, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

⁵⁶ Minute Sheets, 19-Jan-40 & 12-Sep-40, *ibid*.

Czech, Dutch, German, French, South American Spanish, and Afrikaans.⁵⁷ Thus the Ministry's ability to provide language staff for the BBC was limited.

For most of 1941, discussion with the government regarding BBC foreign staff focussed on three issues, the lifting of restrictions on aliens employed by the Corporation, the use of alien staff in non-language roles, and the restriction of specific job categories to British citizens. The latter two issues had a more direct impact on female staff. When the war began in September 1939, BBC German staff had immediately come under police Alien Orders, with regulations and restrictions on their travel and curfews put in place. For example, German Translator Sophie Lubke had been trapped in London without a change of clothing, unable to return to her home in Weybridge until she was granted special permission by Scotland Yard to retrieve her personal belongings.⁵⁸ However by the end of September most of these issues had been resolved, and German and Austrian nationals employed by the BBC had been exempted from all restrictions.⁵⁹

These arrangements ended in June 1940 with the collapse of France, when the movement restrictions were again applied to all foreign nationals through the Aliens (Movement Restriction) Order, 1940. All aliens, including those on the BBC staff, were prohibited from owning or operating cars, bicycles, and wireless sets. Curfews were also imposed between the hours of 10.30pm and 6am, or midnight to 6am in London, and foreign nationals were not allowed to spend the night away from their regular domicile without police permission.⁶⁰ For several months, the BBC was prohibited from hiring enemy-alien staff.⁶¹ Over the course of 1940 and into 1941, the Corporation negotiated relaxation of these restrictions, in Worcestershire for the Monitoring Service, in the London area for European and Overseas staff, and in Warwickshire for aliens billeted and working at Park Hall. This included curfew exemptions for those on the evening shift, permission to use a bicycle, and permission to be away from their residence for up to fourteen days without having to notify the police. Gaining these exemptions required protracted

⁵⁷ Minute Sheet, 12-Sep-40, *ibid.*

⁵⁸ Memo, 12-Dec-39, AGE0 to GEO & DSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 2."; Letter, 12-Sep-39, GEO to Grubb (Scotland Yard), *ibid.* Hans Priwin was prevented from picking up his daughter in Wales and driving her to Cornwall when her school was evacuated.

⁵⁹ Letter, 27-Sep-39, Philip Anderson's office to Campbell Stuart, *ibid.*

⁶⁰ "The 5th Column: Position of the B.B.C.", Hansard, HL Deb, 12-Jun-42, vol 116, cc 530-70, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1940/jun/12/the-fifth-column-position-of-the-bbc>, accessed, 21-Sep-2018.

⁶¹ Memo, 3-Aug-40, EurLS to DEurS; 8-Sep-40, C(O) to DPA(O); 2-Oct-40, AGE0 to GEO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3a."

negotiations between the BBC and the Home Office, and the Home Office and the local Police Constabularies in Warwickshire and Worcestershire.⁶²

BBC German and Austrian staff had been exempted from internment in 1939. However in May 1940, the BBC had ruled that the Corporation would terminate staff members who had been interned, as well as those who were married to or intimate with internees.⁶³ Despite these stated regulations, the BBC did not automatically release those working in the Overseas Services Division, and expressed concern over the distress caused through internment.⁶⁴ During the height of the crisis in summer 1940, the BBC even entertained the notion of forming their own voluntary internment camp that would house BBC staff and their wives.⁶⁵ Women staff who were enemy aliens were generally not interned, but in at least one case this led to greater difficulties in getting curfew and movement restrictions lifted. Internees who had been cleared by a tribunal received an endorsement on their registration papers. Giovanna Foa, a member of the Italian Service, who had neither been interned nor had come before a tribunal, was unable to obtain an endorsement on her registration papers. Although as a BBC employee she should have been exempt from restrictions, she was not able to receive the exemption in practice. An appeal had to be made to the Home Office through Scotland Yard before the exemption was granted.⁶⁶

The second area of negotiation with the MOLNS concerned hiring non-British women for vacant clerical positions. When the issue was broached with the MOLNS the response was a straightforward approval. However, the BBC internal discussions betrayed a wariness in approaching the MOLNS, and apprehension that the Corporation would face potential criticism from both the MOLNS and the public.⁶⁷ The Monitoring Service Executive, George J.B. Allport, forcefully advocated relaxing the pre-war regulations concerning hiring alien staff particularly to resolve clerical shortages in the Overseas Services Division.⁶⁸ In order to make the proposal more palatable, General Establishment Officer, Douglas Clarke, suggested that the approach to the MOLNS should intimate that hiring alien clerical staff would ease the recruitment problems in addition to building a pool of candidates for future

⁶² Memo, 3-Dec-40, Tallents to Newsam, *ibid.*; See generally, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

⁶³ Questions for Swinton Committee, 11-Jun-40, Farquharson, "Formalities, General Correspondence (Excluding External Services)."

⁶⁴ Letter, 21-Aug-40, C(O) to Drinkwater, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3a." Two German Service staff members, Walter Rilla and Mrs Marguerite Wolff, had sons interned, and the Controller of the Overseas Services Division, Stephen Tallents, was eager to help both

⁶⁵ Memo, 28-May-40, C(O) to ONE, *ibid.*

⁶⁶ Memos, 8-Nov-40, AGE0 to DPA(O); 23-Nov-40, AGE0 to C(O), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

⁶⁷ Memo, 27-Jan-41, GEO to DSA, *ibid.*

⁶⁸ Memo, 16-Jan-41, MSeX to DPA(O), *ibid.*

openings requiring language skills.⁶⁹ When Ernest V. Crookenden at the MOLNS was consulted about the exception in early 1941 he readily agreed. He indicated that the MOLNS had long thought this was a solution for the BBC but had no authority regarding this aspect of the BBC licence. The only caveat proposed was that non-British staff should be dismissed if British staff could be found to fill the positions.⁷⁰ Given the tightness of the labour market, the emergence of a large pool of British subjects seemed remote.

The BBC received the news with some relief but did not immediately move to announce the concession within the organisation. Seemingly, the administrators still feared that they would come under criticism if they began to exploit this source of workers, and the decision was made to cautiously pursue recruitment of non-British women.⁷¹ The Corporation faced the real possibility that the issue would be aired with the general public. MP Sir Waldron Smithers, who in the post-war era would routinely criticise the BBC for employing Communists, was also critical of the BBC hiring foreign nationals during the war.⁷² Not only did Sir Waldron ask a question in Parliament regarding the number of aliens employed by the BBC and their salaries in 1941, he also published an article in the *Worcester Evening Times* naming specific aliens and their positions within the organisation.⁷³ Chief among his criticisms were that these individuals were allowed to have 'good jobs' at the expense of British citizens.⁷⁴ The criticisms glossed over the fact that few British citizens possessed the necessary language qualifications, and those that did were most likely in direct government service. The information divulged by Sir Waldron in the *Worcester Evening Times* regarding specific BBC staff led the Monitoring Service to suspect that the information had been leaked by a member of staff.⁷⁵ These suspicions point to an awareness that non-British staff also faced internal opposition. These fears proved to have some basis and will be discussed further below.

Within the Corporation, the expansion of job opportunities to non-British women met with mixed responses. In 1941, recruiter Miss Cockle, who was associated with the Overseas Services Division, welcomed the opportunity to exploit a new source of labour.⁷⁶ At the same time, another Overseas Services Division recruiter, Mrs Haverfield, expressed

⁶⁹ Memo, 3-Feb-41, GEO to OEO, *ibid*.

⁷⁰ Meeting Notes, 18-Feb-41, OEO and Crookenden (MOLNS), *ibid*.

⁷¹ Memo, 5-Mar-41, OEO to GEO, *ibid*.

⁷² Sanchia Berg, "Was There a Communist Witch-Hunt at the BBC?," *BBC News Magazine*, 26 January 2016.

⁷³ Hansard Extract, 17-Apr-41, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

⁷⁴ Newspaper Extract, 11-Feb-42, *Worcester Evening Times*, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

⁷⁵ Memo, 19-Feb-42, Rush to DMS, *ibid*.

⁷⁶ Memo, 31-Jan-41, Cockle to WSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

scepticism about hiring foreign staff even for positions requiring language qualifications.⁷⁷ However, a few months later Haverfield had not only begun to hire non-British women as secretaries for different languages services, but was also considering them for non-language posts.⁷⁸ When the Music Department asked if it was possible to hire naturalised British subjects, Recruitment Officer for Clerical Staff, Dorothy Tomlinson, expressed the opinion that naturalised women were no different than foreign ones, and should not be hired for positions that did not require special qualifications. Tomlinson went on to note that she agreed with the Music Department's assessment that hiring a German-born British subject would provoke bad feelings among the staff.⁷⁹

Tomlinson's response also included an anecdote regarding the recruitment of a small group of young female German refugees, which highlights the issues with internal prejudices that arose over recruitment of foreign staff. Although she pronounced the "experiment" generally successful, Tomlinson also harshly criticised Jewish women in this group for their "... aggressive characteristics that one knows so well."⁸⁰ Before the memo was passed to the intended recipient, Tomlinson asked Douglas Clarke to review the memo for procedural clarification.⁸¹ When passed on for comment to his superior, William Pym, the response was to cancel the memo and for Clarke to inform Tomlinson that naturalised Britons were no different than British-born subjects. Pym further stated that Tomlinson's memo "... [did] not represent the Corporation's attitude."⁸²

The third issue that arose in 1941 with the MOLNS concerned special job categories reserved for British subjects. Even before the war began, certain supervisory roles in the language services had been restricted to British subjects, including Editors and Sub-Editors, with the BBC adding Language Supervisors and Switch Censors to the category due to the supervisory nature of the roles. The then-Director-General Frederick Ogilvie, in consultation with the Government, made this decision on security grounds.⁸³ Despite the official consultation on the matter, the origins of this security measure were challenged by the MOLNS in 1941, in an effort to dislodge more BBC male staff for government service.⁸⁴ With regards to this particular issue the MOI acted as an intermediary, and the back and forth seemed especially tense. The MOLNS appeared to think that the BBC had concocted

⁷⁷ Memo, 29-Jan-41, Haverfield to WSA, *ibid*.

⁷⁸ Memos, 12-May-41, WSA to Haverfield; 21-May-41, Haverfield to WSA, *ibid*.

⁷⁹ Memos, 29-Sep-42, Assistant Staff Officer (Bedford) to RO(C); 3-Oct-42, RO(C) to Assistant Staff Officer (Bedford), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

⁸⁰ *Ibid*.

⁸¹ Memo, 2-Oct-42, RO(C) to AppO, *ibid*.

⁸² Note, 13-Oct-42, DSA to AppO, *ibid*.

⁸³ Draft letter, circa Apr-41, DSA to Charles (MOI), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."; Memo, 15-Oct-43, DEurO to AC(EurS), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

⁸⁴ Memo, 29-Mar-41, GEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

the restriction, and the Corporation was not taking steps to resolve the issue quickly. After several rounds of meetings, telephone calls, and letters the MOI eventually agreed that the security implications, including the potential use of broadcasts in espionage, was too great a risk to trade enhanced security for the sake of labour shortages.⁸⁵

Less than a year later, the issues of nationality and promotion arose again. Several foreign nationals were being considered for promotion in the Greek Service. In the discussions about appointing a deputy for the chief editor, two non-British nationals, C. Hadjiagyris and S. Soteriades, were being considered for the role. However, the main thought was that there would also be no objections from the team if Miss Wood, a British subject and a Sub-Editor, assumed the role. The only discrepancy would be the fact that she earned £200 less per annum than Soteriades.⁸⁶ Hadjiagyris was ultimately conscripted into the Greek Army, making the prospect of his promotion moot.⁸⁷ However, it is unclear if Wood was appointed as deputy, although she was not the only woman working as a Sub-Editor. As mentioned above, Olga K. Bolz was a Senior Sub-Editor for the Monitoring Service, and other women also held these posts.⁸⁸ A March 1942 survey noted that there were two women Editors, Sheila Grant-Duff and Margaret Sampson. Five more were Sub-Editors, and five held supervisory positions (Appendix Three). This list only included women between the ages of nineteen and thirty who were liable for conscription or registration. For example, Cecilia Reeves, who held a responsible position in the French Service, was not included on the survey as she was born in 1907, and therefore outside conscription and reservation age.

Later in the war, the principle of hiring British subjects was still being upheld, even when those with language ability were difficult to identify. Mrs Clarke and George Kwai, both naturalised British subjects, were hired as Japanese Switch Censors over non-British candidates.⁸⁹ Switch Censors were tasked with ensuring programmes were read as scripted and had the authority to stop any broadcast – switch them off – if they deviated from the written script. As such, the Switch Censors needed to be fluent in the language being broadcast and have impeccable security credentials. As was the case with Wood in the Greek Section, the adherence to rules over nationality in supervisory roles created

⁸⁵ Letter, 30-May-41, Bamford (MOI) to DSA, *ibid*.

⁸⁶ Letter, 25-Feb-42, OEO to Bamford (MOI), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

⁸⁷ Letter, 22-Apr-42, DEurO to Bamford (MOI), *ibid*.

⁸⁸ Memo, 25-Mar-42, MSeX to AOEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b."; Application Form, circa 1949, "Left Staff, Howlett, Muriel Grace," (BBC WAC L1/1358/1, 1935).

⁸⁹ Meeting Notes, 26-Sep-44, A/C(OS) and ESD; Memo, 20-Oct-44, Shelmerdine to A/C(OS), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5a," (BBC WAC R49/11/6, 1944).

opportunities for women to assume roles that had been designated in 1940 as either male-only, Sub-Editors, or preferred-male, Switch Censors.⁹⁰

When French National A.C. Landrieu was briefly appointed Senior Sub-Editor in the French Service in 1945, the question of nationality was again reviewed. Despite the staff shortages that prompted Landrieu's appointment, the principle was determined to be too important to abandon. Landrieu was swiftly moved back into a production role.⁹¹ As a man, there was no ambiguity about Landrieu's citizenship and even though he was from an allied nation no exception was made. Shortly thereafter, Marjorie Olga Moltke-Hanson, although a Finnish citizen, was allowed to act as a relief Sub-Editor and Switch Censor due to the fact that she was British by birth.⁹² Under relaxed Civil Service regulations, which the BBC was instructed to operate under, women who had lost their citizenship through marriage were treated as if they had retained their British citizenship, and in this instance she was allowed to fill a role that was usually reserved for men. The BBC felt that in practice the relaxation of Civil Service rules on hiring non-nationals put the Civil Service on the same level as the peacetime BBC.⁹³

Restrictions on British women married to non-nationals came back into practice quickly after the war ended. One example was Brigit Maas, who had started the war as a Query Clerk in Monitoring and swiftly rose to become a F&D Producer, working on the programmes *Transatlantic Call* and *War Report*. She resigned in July 1946 and married an American.⁹⁴ When she was offered a short-term contract to write and produce for the programme *Progress Report* in 1948, questions were raised about her nationality. The Administrative Officer thought she would need a permit from the MOLNS to complete the assignment, which he felt was unobtainable.⁹⁵ When notified that Maas had retained her British citizenship, as the United States did not automatically confer citizenship on spouses, there were still some doubts about her employability before permission was ultimately granted.⁹⁶ This suggested that the MOLNS was tightly monitoring the BBC regarding issues of nationality.

⁹⁰ Report, 31-Jan-40, "Central Register, British Broadcasting Corporation Co-Operation."

⁹¹ Memo, 22-Jan-45, Shelmerdine to HSA; 2-Feb-45, HSA to C(EurS); 19-Feb-45, DEurO to HSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b," (BBC WAC R49/11/7, 1945).

⁹² Memo, 17-Mar-45, Shelmerdine to EurEO; 4-Apr-45, Shelmerdine to HSA, *ibid*.

⁹³ Letter, 24-Mar-41, from Hopkins (Treasury); Memo, 6-May-41 OEO to DSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3b."

⁹⁴ Front Cover "Left Staff, Maas, Brigit," (BBC WAC L1/276, 1940-1946).

⁹⁵ Memo, 14-10-48, Features Organiser to AO(Ent), *ibid*.

⁹⁶ Memo, 15-Oct-48, Features Organiser to AO(Ent); 21-Oct-48, Features Organiser to AHPC, *ibid*.

LIAISON WITH THE SECURITY SERVICES AND PUBLIC SCRUTINY

As indicated above, gaining permission to hire foreign staff for language services was initially a cumbersome, multi-step processes. Prior to the war, the Corporation first had to obtain permission from the PMG. Further approval and the issuance of work permits were needed from the Home Office. When the permits were finally approved they were often for short periods of time, for as little as a few weeks or up to a six-month maximum.⁹⁷ Sometimes notice of approval arrived a few weeks before the expiration date, and the process would begin anew. After the Home Office issued permits, the documents had to be presented and registered with the Alien Registration Office at the Bow Street Police Station.⁹⁸ In addition to all of the above steps, the candidates were also subjected to scrutiny conducted by MI5.⁹⁹

Coordination improved slightly once the war began and the permission to hire aliens shifted from the PMG to the MOI. The MOI gave the BBC blanket approval, providing that the candidates had passed security screening by MI5.¹⁰⁰ The vetting process was obliquely referred to as “colleging” in BBC files. The term was derived from the wartime location of the MI5 office dealing with security screenings, which was at Bedford College in London.¹⁰¹ This still left the Home Office work-permit procedures and registration with the police. Scotland Yard eventually assumed control of the police registration process, and by December 1939 the Home Office switched from short-term work permits to issuing open-ended permits. However, at this point, many of the original employees underwent an additional round of security clearance by MI5.

Although responsibility for liaising with the government initially bounced between Administrative Assistants, Eleanor Shelmerdine assumed control over coordination both with MI5 and the Alien War Services Department (AWSO) in early 1942. Shelmerdine, and her assistant Mrs. Hindle, formed the Security Section of the Staff Administration Division which reported directly to William Pym. Although Shelmerdine carried no official title, she appeared to have been involved in recruitment for the Monitoring Service in 1939, and was attached to the Overseas Intelligence Department in 1941.¹⁰² She assumed her security

⁹⁷ Memo, 4 -May-38, GEO to OSEx, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 1."

⁹⁸ Memo, 18-Jul-38, Spanish PRO to DSA, *ibid*.

⁹⁹ Minute Sheet, DATE, "Liaison with the BBC," (Kew, Surrey: The National Archives of the UK, 1933-1940).

¹⁰⁰ Memo, 19-Sep-39, DSA to GEO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 2."; Memo, 5-Jan-40, A/AGEO to GEO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3a."

¹⁰¹ Jean Seaton, *Pinkoes and Traitors : The BBC and the Nation, 1974–1987* (London: Profile Books, 2015), 225-231.

¹⁰² "Staff Policy, Permanent Staff," (BBC WAC R49/523, 1941), 36.

liaison role in January 1942.¹⁰³ By 1944 she had been regraded to a senior position in a salary grade that commanded £400 to £600 per annum depending on the age of the employee.¹⁰⁴ Her duties were wide-ranging. On top of coordinating the granting of security clearances, residence permits, and exemption to alien restrictions, Shelmerdine attended weekly Liaison Officers' Conference meetings regarding security, and worked with the Findlater Stewart Committee, which prevented the leakage of information regarding the D-Day military operations.¹⁰⁵ For her service as liaison, she received an undisclosed allowance from MI5 until the end of 1945.¹⁰⁶

MI5 had been involved with the BBC from at least the 1930s. Informal contact was first initiated in 1933 with Colonel Alan Dawnay, who was the Controller of Programmes for the BBC until 1935.¹⁰⁷ Upon Dawnay's departure, the role fell first to his successor Cecil Graves, and by the time the war had commenced, MI5 had been in contact with Pym regarding the vetting of staff for a number of years.¹⁰⁸ Therefore it is not surprising that Pym's office became the locus of security screening of staff. However, security clearances were not the only way that MI5 was involved with the BBC. Suspicions and tensions amongst staff members arose very early in the war. By 1940, the BBC was requesting guidance over a growing number of internal and external complaints concerning employment of aliens, pacifism, defeatism and other security concerns. This surge in complaints coincided with the Dunkirk evacuation, and arose during an ongoing 'careless talk' propaganda campaign amidst concerns over fifth column activities. Jo Fox noted that the May to June 1940 period was marked by increased rumours in public discourse on espionage and enemy agents in Britain.¹⁰⁹

Two of the cases dealt with female Monitoring Service Typists. One complaint concerned a report that a staff member accused a colleague of making defeatist, unpatriotic

¹⁰³ Memo, 6-Dec-39, Marriott to Macrae, "Staff Policy, Monitors, Selection Committee." This memo was signed by Shelmerdine for Marriott and suggested that she was working closely with Marriott on Monitoring recruitment; Meeting Notes, 7-Jan-42, DSA, ADSA, GEO, A/OEO, Frost & Miss Shelmerdine; WSI-132, 29-Jan-42, "Staff Policy, Security, College, Clearance Policy," (BBC WAC R49/618, 1940-1947).

¹⁰⁴ Memo, 30-May-44, DSA to DDG, "Formalities, General Correspondence (Excluding External Services)."; Letter, 19-May-44, EurEO to May (PID), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5a." "The salary entry point varies according to age from £400 to £600 on Grade B1 and from £300 to £450 on Grade C." The reference here to the salary range was for a B1 announcer, but the range for all B1 staff would have been the same.

¹⁰⁵ Memos, 14-Aug-42 & 26-May-44, Shelmerdine to DSA, "Formalities, General Correspondence (Excluding External Services)."

¹⁰⁶ Letter, 27-Oct-45, Pym to redacted (MI5), *ibid*.

¹⁰⁷ Report to DSS, 20-Dec-33, "Liaison with the BBC."

¹⁰⁸ Report, 23-Aug-35; Minute Notes, 2-Dec-36, *ibid*.

¹⁰⁹ Jo Fox, "Careless Talk: Tensions within British Domestic Propaganda During the Second World War," *Journal of British Studies*, no. 4 (2012): 936-943.

statements and knitting “in the German fashion”.¹¹⁰ The accusation had been supported by an anonymous letter that coincidentally had been written on the same type of letter paper used by the accuser, although the handwriting differed. The accuser denied any connection with the anonymous letter. The second complaint concerned a Night Typist in the Monitoring Service who was accused of being “a rumour monger and to prefer the government of Hitler”.¹¹¹ Another vague complaint was made against a Registry clerk, likely to have been Gabriele Mode, hired for her knowledge of German, Spanish and Portuguese. In all there were eight different examples, of which half concerned female employees.

It is unclear if any of the cases detailed were investigated by MI5, but the agency agreed that it was inappropriate for the BBC to investigate its own staff, but that discretion in weeding out any spiteful accusations would be expected.¹¹² An announcer stationed at Evesham also questioned the loyalty of foreign Monitoring staff, suggesting they were arrogant with the locals and that upwards of ten percent had questionable loyalties. Another memo suggested that no British BBC staff members were willing to vouch for any alien employees.¹¹³ Although there is no indication that women came under greater scrutiny in this regard, Jo Fox and Antonia Lant have both discussed how women, in particular, were marked as security risks. These risks included women’s supposed unguarded nature and tendency to gossip, as well as the dangers posed by sexual allure.¹¹⁴

As indicated in Chapter Four, external criticism of the BBC continued throughout the war (see page 167). The BBC had long been sensitive to external judgements and how the actions of staff members could colour the reputation of the organisation. This is perhaps why the Administrative staff had been cautious about using non-British nationals to fill clerical positions. An incident in 1944 demonstrated the need for this cautious approach, particularly with regard to the employment of aliens. The Director-General received a letter regarding two German-born refugees employed at the BBC.¹¹⁵ The letter suggested that although the employees were probably refugees, their allegiance was in question, and moreover, they were profiting from good careers that should belong to someone British. The final suggestion was that “so-called refugees from Nazi oppression” were getting “dug

¹¹⁰ Letter, 28-Jun-40, Cruttwell to Captain Liddell, "Liaison with the BBC."

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Letter, 28-Aug-40, Frost; Note, Oct-40; Note 50/6/72, 5-Aug-40, Hollis, *ibid*.

¹¹³ Interview, 7-Jun-40, Curwen & Fuller; Memo, 27-Jun-40, ADPA(O) to AGE0, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 3a."

¹¹⁴ Fox, "Careless Talk," 960-965; Lant, "Mobile Femininity," 18-22.

¹¹⁵ Memo/Report, 19-Jan-43, Shelmerdine to AppO, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."; Memo, 24-Jan-45, Shelmerdine to HSA; Letter, 1-May-45, HSA to Woodburn (MOI), "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b." The staff members were Walter P. Rilla, and his son Wolfgang. The letter writer was one of their neighbours.

in” and would be a security risk in the next war to come.¹¹⁶ Even though the Corporation fully supported its staff, the response was handled carefully due to the possibility of public criticism. This caution was echoed by a BBC contact at the MOLNS, who felt that there was increasing public agitation regarding the employment of aliens that even extended into placement in national service organisations.¹¹⁷

The letter affected administrative procedure and prompted a thorough examination of the number of aliens working within the Corporation, particularly women working in weekly-paid non-language clerical roles. Men were much less affected as only a small number worked in non-language roles. Fifty-three women fell into this category, the majority of whom were either now working in language roles or were on reserve for language positions. Seventeen women were unable to perform language work, and seven of these were British-born women who had lost their citizenship through marriage – leaving only ten non-British women.¹¹⁸ The actual number of aliens working in weekly-paid, non-language roles was slightly higher, but aliens working in catering, nursing and in hostels were excluded from this reckoning. There were only five monthly-paid alien staff in non-language roles, two women and three men. Both women were former British nationals.¹¹⁹ After this internal examination, the BBC sought approval of its previous arrangements regarding alien women in clerical roles, and those in exempt categories. Permission to retain two of the three men was also requested.¹²⁰

These internal examinations had been an apt reading of the public mood. In early 1945, questions in Parliament probed the numbers and the necessity of hiring aliens, particularly enemy aliens in government departments.¹²¹ In April of that year, the employment of German-born personnel in the Monitoring Service was queried, again in response to a letter. On this occasion the letter had been sent by a former BBC Monitoring Engineer to Lord Ailwyn, Eric William Edward Fellowes. The letter questioned the loyalty of German-born BBC staff and suggested that the Corporation did not provide security safeguards, intimating that there were no British nationals acting as supervisors.¹²² The letter prompted the House of Lords to table a motion criticising the employment of non-naturalized Germans in government. On 2 May 1945, just days before the end of the European war, portions of the letter critical of the BBC were read out in the Lords. A lengthy

¹¹⁶ Letter, 12-Dec-44, Woodford to Haley, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5a."

¹¹⁷ Telephone Record, 18-Dec-44, Billingham (AWS) & Shelmerdine, *ibid*.

¹¹⁸ Memo, 3-Feb-45, AppO to Shelmerdine, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b."

¹¹⁹ Memo, 24-Jan-45, Shelmerdine to HSA, *ibid*.

¹²⁰ Letter, 1-May-45, Pym to Woodburn, *ibid*.

¹²¹ "German Employees", Hansard, HOC deb, 26-Jan-45, vol 407, C1145W, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1945/jan/26/german-employees#S5CV0407PO_19450126_CWA_9, accessed 16-Jul-2018.

¹²² Letter, 13-Apr-45, Davis (MOI) to Farquharson, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b."

discussion followed, with the Marquess of Reading, Gerald Isaacs, and the Earl of Munster, Geoffrey FitzClarence, vigorously defending the BBC. Lord Ailwyn ultimately withdrew his motion, while still maintaining that the government should have no cause to hire any aliens.¹²³

Although the BBC was ultimately satisfied that the Corporation had been defended in public, the incident sparked another round of confirmation of staff numbers. Overall in 1945 the BBC employed sixty-six German-born staff in the Monitoring Service and a further sixty-nine in the Corporation as a whole.¹²⁴ With a total of 135 German-born staff, the BBC employed almost as many Germans as the total number of aliens employed by the government. An October 1945 response to Sir Waldron Smithers by the Financial Secretary of the Treasury indicated that there were 155 aliens employed across thirty-four government departments and organisations, and only thirty-two were German or stateless.¹²⁵ In contrast, the BBC at its peak in June 1945 employed over 600 aliens, roughly five-and-a-half percent of all BBC staff.¹²⁶ The number of foreign-born female staff cannot be precisely stated, but fifty-six out of 132, forty-two percent, of alien Monitoring staff were women in 1943.¹²⁷ The BBC was eager to limit public discussion of the topic. When the BBC Staff (Wartime) Association wanted to publish a letter in support of their German colleagues in *The Times*, the BBC Staff Administration indicated that Lord Munster's reply had been sufficient.¹²⁸ A few weeks after Lord Ailwyn's motion, the MOI reconfirmed the current BBC arrangements regarding alien staff members, including the right to maintain a reserve language pool, and exemptions for nursing, catering and hostel staff.¹²⁹

GOVERNMENT AS REGULATORS AND COMPETITORS

As discussed in Chapters Three and Five, the biggest test to the relationship with the MOLNS would come in 1942 as women between the ages of twenty and thirty came under the aegis of the National Service Act¹³⁰ The May 1942 Employment of Women (Control of Engagement) Order also hampered recruitment and retention of staff in the Overseas,

¹²³ "German Nationals in Great Britain", Hansard, HL deb, 2-May-45, vol 136 cc102-36, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/lords/1945/may/02/german-nationals-in-great-britain>, accessed, 1-Jul-2018

¹²⁴ Memo, 17-Apr-45, Shelmerdine to HSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b."

¹²⁵ "Alien Employees", Hansard, HC deb, 22-Oct-44, vol 414, c1825W, <https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/written-answers/1945/oct/22/alien-employees>, accessed, 21-Sep-2018.

¹²⁶ Message, 21-Jun-45, from Fuller, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b."

¹²⁷ Letter, 20-Mar-43, Harris to DSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

¹²⁸ Memo, 14-May-45, Felgate to HSA; 16-May-45, SAO to HSA, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5b."

¹²⁹ Letter, 26-May-45, Woodburn to Pym, *ibid*.

¹³⁰ Memo, 6-Mar-42, WarSO to Joint DGs, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b."

European, and Monitoring Services.¹³¹ The Services, particularly the Monitoring Service, were alarmed as a large proportion of their clerical staff came under threat of removal. Other changes in 1942 also negatively affected the BBC's ability to recruit and retain staff, including policies towards enemy aliens. This presented the possibility of losing women and men not bound by conscription regulations. As Footitt and Tobia have discussed, the military services and the government had an insatiable need for translators, particularly German-language speakers.¹³² These findings were also noted in Christopher Smith's work on the GC&CS.¹³³

Initially the BBC had been led to believe that they would be able to retain women with special qualifications including shorthand typists and technical staff.¹³⁴ From the start the Monitoring Service required a large number of stenographic staff, some of whom were expected to act as English Monitors.¹³⁵ When the MOLNS exemptions for skilled clerical staff proved to be more restrictive than anticipated, the Monitoring Service Executive protested. Charles P. Jubb and George Allport, who both served as the Monitoring Service Executive during the most intense period of conscription, declared that no one at Evesham was expendable.¹³⁶ Allport aggressively refused to surrender any female staff, and offered only five staff members out of the twenty-eight in the twenty to twenty-one age range.¹³⁷ Jubb continued the forthright stance when he took over from Allport in March 1942.¹³⁸

The Overseas Services and the European Services Divisions, particularly the News Sections, and the Monitoring Service were reliant on fast and accurate typists. These branches also worked on a twenty-four-hour shift system, both of which were deemed more suitable for women under the age of thirty. An additional hurdle to retaining the News Typists was, that as shorthand was not a requirement for the position, the MOLNS did not classify News Typists as possessing special qualifications.¹³⁹ Although the Monitoring Service was forced to accept some release of staff, their efforts did yield results. Only two staff members were released immediately, and another fifty-one were deferred at least

¹³¹ Memo, 29-Apr-42, WarSO to RecrD, *ibid.*

¹³² Footitt and Tobia, *War Talk*, 37-45.

¹³³ Smith, *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park: A Social and Organisational History, 1939-1945*, 55-57.

¹³⁴ Letter, 4-Nov-41, Smieton (MOLNS) to Burlton, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1a."

¹³⁵ Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring " 81.

¹³⁶ Meeting Notes, 19-Jan-42, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1a."; Memo, 6-Mar-42, MSeX to WEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b."

¹³⁷ Memo, 9-Mar-42, MSeX to Wakeham, Lampson & Rush; 17-Mar-42, MSeX to WarSO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b."

¹³⁸ Memo, 30-Mar-42, MSeX to WEO, *ibid.*

¹³⁹ Memo, 14-Dec-41, SNE to C(H); 16-Dec-41, NEx to C(H); Letter Extract, 23-Dec-41, WEO to MOLNS Evesham, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1a."

temporarily.¹⁴⁰ The Overseas Services Division used temporary deferments to ultimately negotiate retention of staff. Of twenty-two staff on a six-month deferment, only eleven were offered for release.¹⁴¹ Deferment allowed the BBC to find replacements, but it also left the door open for deferments to become indefinite.¹⁴² Eventually most women on six-month deferrals at Evesham and the News Typists in the Overseas Services Division received indefinite deferments.¹⁴³

The MOLNS pushed for the BBC to release women under the age of thirty-one, and often refused to accept BBC arguments regarding the indispensability of women to different branches. Even women with language qualifications were not always deemed to have special abilities. In a concessionary mood, Jubb admitted that a British female Monitor with German language skills should be released as there was a waiting list of non-nationals for the German section.¹⁴⁴ BBC terminology and staff designations also caused confusion, particularly the label 'clerk'. In the Civil Service, clerks were low-level employees, whereas the BBC used the term for more responsible positions.¹⁴⁵ Even monthly-paid women staff were often not seen as possessing special qualifications. Jean Metcalfe, a female announcer for the Overseas Services, was denied deferment in 1944 despite previous agreements with the MOLNS not to demand the release of monthly-paid women staff. Administrators jested that "... the Ministry of Labour thinks we must have a superfluity of announcers as a result of the introduction of the General Forces Programme!"¹⁴⁶

One line of argument that did resonate with the MOLNS was the issue of recruitment difficulties in specific regions of the country. Some areas of the country were termed 'Scarlet' zones, meaning that recruitment in this area was difficult.¹⁴⁷ The MOLNS even prevented women domiciled in these areas from accepting jobs outside of these localities. Evesham was one such area, and the local MOLNS branch occasionally refused to allow women to take positions with the BBC. The BBC sometimes resorted to recruiting staff from the London area and then transferring them to Evesham. Advertisements were also placed for Evesham staff in *The Manchester Guardian*, *The Glasgow Herald*, *The Aberdeen Journal*,

¹⁴⁰ Memo, 20-May-42, AWEO to MSeX, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 2."

¹⁴¹ Report, 10-Sep-42, *ibid.*

¹⁴² Memo, 8-Jun-42, WSO Evesham to SWSO(P); Telephone Record, 13-Aug-42, *ibid.*; Memo, 16-Nov-42, Spicer to AO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 3," (BBC WAC R49/941/4, 1942).

¹⁴³ Memo, 27-Oct-42, AO(N) to C(N), "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 3."

¹⁴⁴ Memo, 25-Mar-42, MSeX to AOEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b."

¹⁴⁵ Memo, 4-Jan-44, WarSo to AO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 3."; Memo, 26-Dec-41, PCD to WEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1a."

¹⁴⁶ Memo, 13-Mar-44, WarSO to AO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 3."

¹⁴⁷ Memo, 19-Mar-42, MSeX to DDSA; 24-Apr-42, WarRO to AWEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 1b."; Letter, 20-Oct-42, WarSO to Bankes (MOLNS), "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 3."

The Scotsman, The Yorkshire Post, The Newcastle Chronicle, and the Liverpool Post.¹⁴⁸ As a testament to the difficulties at Evesham, wartime Monitoring staff member Marjory Todd noted in her autobiography that the BBC was so desperate for typists at Evesham that they hired her despite her lack of typing skills.¹⁴⁹ Over time the BBC's representations to the MOLNS about qualifications and skills yielded to a much more successful argument regarding local recruitment difficulties in Evesham and later, in the Reading area, where the Monitoring Service moved in April 1943.¹⁵⁰

Female European refugees classified as enemy aliens, although not usually subjected to internment, had limited opportunities in terms of employment. As a Jewish refugee from Austria, Kitty Kaufmann joined the BBC when laws against enemy aliens prohibited her from practicing as a nurse.¹⁵¹ Kaufmann had been granted a working visa in Britain to specifically work as a nurse, only to have her permission to work revoked in 1941. A family friend helped to get her a job with the BBC, and she became one of the non-nationals hired initially for general clerical work. Kaufmann was first offered a post as a Junior Secretary, which she turned down, opting for a post as a Teleprinter Operator. Kaufmann feared that her typing skills would be judged inadequate and preferred a role where mistakes could be easily noted, and more importantly, overlooked.¹⁵²

As indicated above, the issue of non-British staff, especially those designated enemy aliens, resurfaced throughout the war. Despite the potential for criticism, the BBC recruited enemy-alien staff largely due to the need for their language expertise. The use of foreign nationals had been a pragmatic response to quickly increase language broadcasting, with difficult security questions being managed by MI5. This pragmatism can be demonstrated by the fact that the Corporation categorically excluded conscientious objectors, both in front of the microphone and behind the scenes. Robert Mackay's research indicated that the BBC refused to retain conscription-age conscientious objectors and limited their rights to be retained on the Category C list of employees who were suspended for the duration of the war.¹⁵³ Mackay has presented various reasons for the BBC's position on the issue. However, the number of staff members initially affected, around fifty, was small and spread throughout the organisation, so the Corporation could have likely afforded to sacrifice conscientious objectors in a way that was not possible with enemy aliens.

¹⁴⁸ Letter, 2-Feb-42, Baker to Griffin (MOLNS), "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 2."

¹⁴⁹ Todd, *Snakes and Ladders*, 194.

¹⁵⁰ Memo, 7-May-42, WSO Bangor to WEO, "Staff Policy, Women Staff and the Services, File 2."

¹⁵¹ Maxine Seller, *We Built up Our Lives: Education and Community among Jewish Refugees Interned by Britain in World War II*, Contributions to the Study of World History (Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2001), 65-66.

¹⁵² Kitty Kaufmann Schafer, interview by Kate Terkanian, 2018.

¹⁵³ Mackay, "'No Place in the Corporation's Service'," 37-46.

The need for support personnel and broadcasters mushroomed as the number of languages being broadcast and monitored grew. However, the BBC was not the only organisation in need of language-trained staff. The Army and the Air Force required personnel to monitor and translate Axis military transmissions. These monitoring facilities, called Y-Stations, listened to German military wavelengths. The GC&CS at Bletchley Park also required linguists. At first these positions were filled by men already in the military, but as men were reassigned to front-line duties the military began to depend on women to fill these roles. Before the registration and conscription of women began in 1941, the military was already resorting to advertising for linguists. Unlike the BBC, the use of alien staff was considered only as the last resort.¹⁵⁴ Both Footitt and Tobia and Christopher Smith have detailed the appetite the GC&CS had for young women both as translators, typists, and machine operators.¹⁵⁵ The MOLNS's insistence that the BBC release skilled female linguists, whether working as typists, registry clerks or translators, for the military or other services undoubtedly sprang from the need to find British citizens to fill these roles. As noted above, German linguists were considered replaceable as the BBC was free to hire non-British German speakers without the same touchy political or security ramifications.

The government's decision to change its policies in 1942 towards enemy aliens and government service upset this delicate balance and left the BBC on uncertain ground. Until 1942 foreign nationals born in enemy nations were not allowed to join any of the regular military services. Instead they served in the Auxiliary Military Pioneer Corps, later designated the Pioneer Corps. The Pioneer Corps carried out infrastructure tasks and was viewed as a labour corps.¹⁵⁶ In addition to light engineering work, these non-combatant corps worked in hospitals, fire brigades, and in bomb disposal units.¹⁵⁷ In mid-1942, the BBC had begun requesting the release of German and Austrian members of the Pioneer Corps for work in the European and Monitoring Services.¹⁵⁸ At roughly the same time, the MOLNS expressed a growing irritation over refusals of foreign nationals to accept work due to lucrative short-term work or the prospect of more stimulating work with the BBC. The MOLNS requested that the BBC start issuing stern rejection letters to aliens and in return

¹⁵⁴ Footitt and Tobia, *War Talk*, 30-37.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 39-45; Smith, *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park* 40-98.

¹⁵⁶ Helen P. Fry, *The King's Most Loyal Enemy Aliens: Germans Who Fought for Britain in the Second World War* (Stroud: Sutton, 2007), 1-26; Meshack Owino, "The Discourse of Overpopulation in Western Kenya and the Creation of the Pioneer Corps," in *The Demographics of Empire: The Colonial Order and the Creation of Knowledge*, ed. Karl Ittmann, Dennis D. Cordell, and Gregory Maddox (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2010), 160-166.

¹⁵⁷ Ann Kramer, *Conscientious Objectors of the Second World War: Refusing to Fight* (Barnsley: Pen and Sword, 2013), 105-121.

¹⁵⁸ Letter, 6-May-42, Nicolson to Kirkpatrick, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 4."

promised to allow anyone placed in interim jobs the opportunity to move into BBC service if a position arose.¹⁵⁹

A few months later the position of the MOLNS hardened. The International Branch of the MOLNS increasingly began to adhere to a stricter interpretation of regulations and began to dislodge alien staff from BBC employment. A Junior Programme Engineer had been ordered to leave the Corporation and was directed into other employment.¹⁶⁰ When questioned over hiring alien women for non-language clerical posts, the MOLNS replied that technically women unsuitable for language posts should be directed to factory work if deemed strong enough, completely reversing previous policy.¹⁶¹ By the end of the year, the MOLNS was refusing to issue permits to enemy aliens for work at the BBC due to their youth, and a month later the MOLNS was threatening to take all German and Austrian nationals, both female and male, under thirty years of age to place them in factory work.¹⁶²

Over the course of January and February 1943, the MOLNS pressured the BBC to release all German and Austrian men under thirty years of age. BBC managers debated the concessions and worried that these first concessions could lead to further ones. The MOLNS indicated that although they were not asking for the release of German and Austrian women at this time, the BBC should also expect to have to release them in the near future. This had the potential to be much more catastrophic for the Monitoring Service as thirty-two women were aged under thirty, whereas only nineteen men were.¹⁶³ In the end, the BBC did not appear to have to release any staff, and representations that they would avoid hiring enemy aliens under thirty seemed to suffice. By the end of April, the MOLNS had agreed to let the BBC keep all the staff that they had been ordered to release.¹⁶⁴ The BBC tactic of delaying and negotiating bore fruit in this instance. Concurrently, public tensions had also eased during these months as German defeats in North Africa and in Russia marked the beginning of sustained military success for the Allied powers.

The BBC had other competitors outside the British government and the military. The private sector often paid higher wages than either the BBC or the government was offering. This caused problems hiring women outside conscription and labour direction

¹⁵⁹ Meeting, 1-Jul-42, Leggett & Billinghamurst (MOLNS); Letter, 13-Aug-42, Brind (MOLNS) to Clarke, *ibid.*; Letter, 1-Sep-42, Clarke to Crookenden (MOLNS), *ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ Telephone Record, 9-Nov-42, Brent [Brind] & Crookenden (MOLNS) & Thornton & Yates (BBC); *ibid.*

¹⁶¹ Telephone Record, 27-Oct-42, Leggett & Billinghamurst (MOLNS), *ibid.*

¹⁶² Memo, 30-Dec-42, EMOS to DSA; Letter, 2-Jan-42, Brind (MOLNS) to DSA; Memo, 20-Jan-43, AppO to DMS, DEurO & AO(N), *ibid.*

¹⁶³ Memo, 19-Jan-43, Shelmerdine to AppO; 20-Jan-43, AppO to DMS, DEurO & AO(N); 25-Jan-42, DEurO to AppO; 16-Feb-43, AppO to DEurO; 25-Feb-43, DMS to AppO, *ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ Memo, 9-Apr-43, from AppO; Letter, 13-Apr-43, DSA to Billinghamurst (MOLNS), *ibid.*

ages, which were the most fruitful sources of recruitment for the BBC. The BBC also faced competition from governments-in-exile for women with language as well as secretarial skills. The Polish government-in-exile not only paid higher wages but appeared to be siphoning staff away from the BBC. When the BBC had tried to hire an Austrian national for a position in the Polish Service, Polish authorities in London gave a negative report on the individual, only to then hire the individual for their own purposes.¹⁶⁵ As the experience with the Polish government-in-exile demonstrated, the competition with government entities and the military was a much more difficult problem to overcome. Security vetting allowed the government, the military, or governments-in-exile to manipulate the rules of engagement to the detriment of the BBC.

SPECIAL CONCESSION – THE NURSERY HOSTEL AT SONNING MANOR

The tight labour market, and rampant wartime inflation, provided incentives for the Corporation to offer concessions to ameliorate the increased cost of living, and to help retain staff members. Two of these measures were a cost-of-living bonus and a family allowance, both introduced in 1942. The complex scheme boosted wages depending on several factors including the work-place location, provision of living accommodations, whether catering was provided, the number of dependents of an individual, and marital status.¹⁶⁶ While female staff were eligible for some of these salary additions, they often did not qualify for the family allowance for spouses or dependents. A low upper limit on the amount a spouse earned disqualified many women. For single women and men, elderly relatives were not classified as dependents. The Board of Governors recognised that the system was unequal, but the Director-General Robert Foot did not want to institute a system that deviated too far from Civil Service practice.¹⁶⁷ Amongst the different branches of the BBC, only the Monitoring Service offered a concession aimed at retaining younger women. This was the establishment of a nursery hostel at Sonning Manor. The remainder of this chapter will explore how the establishment of this hostel exposed both the lengths and limits of the BBC's commitment to female staff.

When the Monitoring Service moved from Evesham to Caversham in April 1943, the unavailability of housing and billets in the area was a major concern for staff members. Caversham was located just outside of Reading in Berkshire near the borders of both Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire, and, in comparison to Evesham, it was a bustling, impersonal metropolis.¹⁶⁸ The initial adjustment to life in Evesham had presented

¹⁶⁵ Memo, 31-Aug-43, NEurMgr to DEurO, *ibid*.

¹⁶⁶ Minutes 111, 19-Feb-42, "Board of Governors Minutes."

¹⁶⁷ Minutes, 12-Mar-41, Red Notes, "Board of Governors, Minutes."; Paper G63/42, 7-Sep-42, DG Foot, "Board of Governors, Papers Incomplete,," (BBC WAC R1/78/2, 1942).

¹⁶⁸ Joan A. Dills, "From Village to Suburb: Caversham 1840 to 1911", cadra.org.uk.

difficulties for the largely international cohort, but by 1942 the community and the Monitoring Service personnel had adapted to each other.¹⁶⁹ The move disrupted some of the staff camaraderie that had developed in Evesham, particularly as the BBC Club facilities that had been so important for the social life in Evesham were not replaced for nearly two years.¹⁷⁰ Although the staff would eventually adjust to their new surroundings, the move felt like the end of an era.¹⁷¹

The staff sought out local billets close to Caversham Park, with some even opting to live in caravans on the Park grounds.¹⁷² In addition, several hostels were established to alleviate the billeting situation. Shiplake Court, five miles northeast of Caversham, served as one hostel, and Great Oaks Lodge, ten miles northwest, served as another that also housed both men and women from the Tatsfield Transmitter.¹⁷³ Nearby Crowsley Park served as a receiving station for the Monitoring Service, and although it did not have accommodation on site, it did have a canteen.¹⁷⁴ Like Caversham Park, the Monitoring Service's new headquarters, Shiplake Court, Great Oaks, and Crowsley Park were large country estates. The nursery hostel established at the Manor House in Sonning, which was four miles from the Caversham headquarters, was exclusively for children, many of whom were children of the foreign nationals who worked with the Monitoring Service.¹⁷⁵

The provision of a nursery hostel was instituted only after the move to Caversham. Although there must have been some debate over the necessity of establishing the hostel, the records only indicated that the request was made to ensure the proper functioning of the Service, with the Board approving its establishment on 4 February 1943.¹⁷⁶ The unoccupied Manor House in Sonning-on-Thames had already been selected, with the only impediment being a prior claim on the property by the Air Ministry. The Air Ministry had earmarked the property for their use but had not yet occupied the building.¹⁷⁷ Brendan

¹⁶⁹ Schafer, interview; Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 24-36, 145-146.

¹⁷⁰ Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 85-90; Meeting Minutes, 26-Feb-45, "Staff Policy, Meetings, Caversham House Committee," (BBC WAC R49/377, 1942-1945).

¹⁷¹ Olive Renier, *Before the Bonfire* (Shipston-on-Stour: P. Drinkwater, 1984), 97-105.

¹⁷² Meeting Minutes, 1-Apr-43, "Staff Policy, Meetings, Caversham House Committee." These caravans had also been used on the grounds at Evesham and had been moved to Caversham by rail.

¹⁷³ Meeting Minutes, 16-Jan-43, 17-Mar-43, 1-Apr-43, *ibid*.

<https://www.shiplake.org.uk/386/about-shiplake/college-history>;

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/ww2peopleswar/stories/24/a7158224.shtml>, both Shiplake Court and Great Oaks Lodge are now schools. Shiplake Court is the site of a college and Great Oaks Lodge is now the Oratory Preparatory School, which had been located at Caversham Park prior to the BBC's purchase of the property in 1941.

¹⁷⁴ Meeting Minutes, 8-Feb-43, *ibid*.

¹⁷⁵ B.K., "Sonning Manor," *Ariel*, Christmas 1944, 15.

¹⁷⁶ Minutes, 4-Feb-43, "Board of Governors Minutes," (BBC WAC R1/11/1, 1943).

¹⁷⁷ Memo, 20-Jan-43, Accommodation Director to DG Foot, "Premises, Caversham, Sonning Manor House: Requisitioning," (BBC WAC R35/340, 1942-1952).

Bracken, the Minister of the MOI, made an appeal to the Air Ministry on the Corporation's behalf representing the acquisition of the property as of vital importance to the war effort. Bracken passed on Foot's assertion regarding the importance of this group of women with small children to the functioning of the Monitoring Service.¹⁷⁸

The mothers are all doing a specialised job either as English or foreign language Monitors. Their husbands are all away in the Army or elsewhere and unless I can provide some place where they can all live together and where the children can be looked after while the mothers are at work, we shall not only be in real danger of losing the majority of them but we shall also not be able to recruit from this class. As far as I can see the only solution is to take a house large enough to hold them all, and run it on hostel lines.¹⁷⁹

Bracken's intervention on the matter is noteworthy as he rarely made personal interventions on the BBC's behalf in any similar types of requests. As noted in Chapter Three, he had refused to make appeals to the Minister of Labour assist with recruitment and retention of typists, noting that ". . . the Minister of Labour could [not] be expected to show much sympathy with arrangements under which the B.B.C. escape the inconveniences, while claiming the benefits, of a Government Department generally (see page 92)."¹⁸⁰

The Corporation employed only a handful of women with children prior to the war, so it was not surprising that no nursery provision had been previously established. However, the Sonning Manor nursery hostel was an extraordinary precedent, though proposed only in connection with the Monitoring Service. The BBC's decision to offer this concession to retain thirty women with young children should be considered alongside the recruitment difficulties and the contentious move from Evesham to Caversham. As indicated in earlier sections of this chapter, recruitment and retention of women between the ages of eighteen and thirty was entering a particularly difficult stage for the Corporation in early 1943. The quote above by Robert Foot indicates that this directly related to the establishment of the nursery hostel, as denoted by the phrase "recruit from this class", as internal documents used the word class to denote specific age ranges that were liable for conscription. In addition, the general dissatisfaction among Monitoring Service staff over the move perhaps also acted as a motivating factor. BBC files, as well Olive Renier and Vladimir Rubenstein in the book *Assigned to Listen*, described anxiety over billets as one of the major concerns staff had with the proposed move to Caversham. Finding rooms for women with young children near the new headquarters at Caversham Park would have been a difficult task, and any disruption or irritation carried the potential for staff resignations.

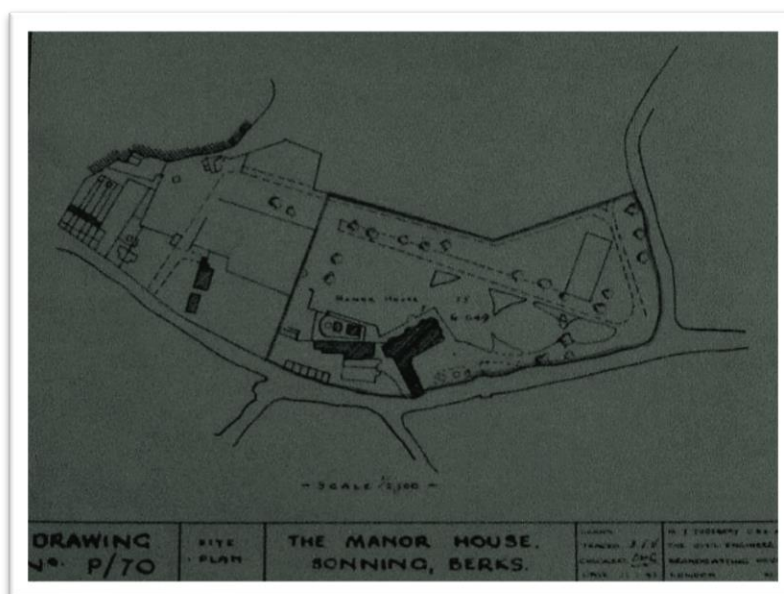
¹⁷⁸ Letter, 11-Feb-43, Bracken (MOI) to Sinclair (Air Ministry), *ibid.*

¹⁷⁹ Letter, 6-Feb-43, Foot to Bracken, *ibid.*

¹⁸⁰ Letter, 29-Jun-43, Ratcliffe (MOI) to DG Foot, "Staff Policy, Recruitment of Staff, Women Clerical Staff, File 1."

Under these circumstances the Corporation was willing to commit to the establishment of the hostel at Sonning.¹⁸¹

FIGURE 6.3: SONNING MANOR HOUSE¹⁸²



There were indications that this commitment was not absolute. Unlike Caversham Park and Shiplake Court, the BBC did not purchase the property and instead requisitioned only the house and some of the land. The extensive kitchen gardens, fields and cottages on the land remained in the control of the property owner. Initially, there was some doubt as to the long-term necessity of the hostel, but in the end the hostel remained operational until April 1947.¹⁸³ The Corporation expressed concern about further property purchases, and feared property values would stagnate after the war. Sonning Manor and Crowsley Park were requisitioned simultaneously, which may have been connected to the uncertain future of the Monitoring Service rather than indicating limited sanction for the childcare provision. However, when Sonning Manor was released in 1947, the BBC did finally purchase Crowsley Park.¹⁸⁴

The Sonning Manor nursery hostel was the only such arrangement made by the BBC. As discussed with the establishment of the Engineering Training School and the Secretarial Training Centre, the BBC often felt that internal solutions were preferable to relying on outside organisations. In this same vein, a newly established creche for children under five

¹⁸¹ Meeting Minutes, 16-Jan-43, 8-Feb-43, "Staff Policy, Meetings, Caversham House Committee."; Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 120-122, 144.

¹⁸² "Premises, Caversham, Sonning Manor House: Requisitioning."

¹⁸³ Memo, 3-May-43, AD to ADLD; Report, 3-May-43, CWC to AC(E), *ibid*.

¹⁸⁴ Minute Extract, 3-Feb-43, DG's Meeting; Memo Extract, 12-Mar-43, Accommodation Director to Civil Engineer; Letter, 22-Feb-47, Norman (MOW) to Robbins, *ibid*.

in Reading was rejected as a possible childcare solution for Monitoring staff, and a BBC-run facility was deemed more suitable.¹⁸⁵

During the war, other organisations did set up residential hostels for children, such as ones sanctioned by the Ministry of Health (MOH) in Leeds and Birmingham, but they were an atypical arrangement during the war.¹⁸⁶ The Women's Voluntary Service and other groups that assisted with children's evacuation to the countryside did offer hostel accommodation for some children. However, these facilities were more usually reserved for children who were difficult to place with families, often children with behavioural issues.¹⁸⁷ Some hostels for young children evacuated with their mothers were also established. Although, the evacuated mothers preferred this sort of accommodation, these facilities were rarely established.¹⁸⁸ Evacuated children came predominantly from urban areas and were often placed at some distance from their parents, with some mothers mitigating this distance by taking up employment closer to their children to facilitate more frequent visits.¹⁸⁹ The proximity of Sonning Manor to Caversham Park meant that Monitoring staff often shared meals with the children.

The Sonning Manor Hostel catered for upwards of forty children at full capacity. Meals for the mothers were also provided at a weekly charge. The mothers were not resident and instead generally had a billet in Sonning Village.¹⁹⁰ Four nurses, housemaids, and a full-time manager were on site to care for the children. At certain points, the subject of billeting both the mothers and the children at Sonning Manor was broached and rejected. The manager, Mrs. Gitts, indicated that the presence of the parents would create problems for the staff, although she did not indicate what these conflicts were other than the adults would find the hostel noisy.¹⁹¹ The Accommodation Director also rejected the proposal as not being cost-effective. The money charged to the parents for meals was higher than the money paid to the staff for billeting off-premises. If the women were resident at Sonning Manor the most the Corporation could have charged them for their room and board was £11.0 per week, which would have been a net loss.¹⁹² The estimated annual cost to

¹⁸⁵ Meeting Minutes, 16-Jan-43, "Staff Policy, Meetings, Caversham House Committee."; Memo, 25-Jan-43, AD to SAD, "Premises, Caversham, Sonning Manor House: Requisitioning."

¹⁸⁶ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 82. Chapter Four of the book discussed childcare arrangements during the war and offered a discussion on the Ministries of Labour and Health's attitude towards and provision of nurseries.

¹⁸⁷ Malcolmson and Malcolmson, *Women at the Ready*, 33, 116 & 133-134.

¹⁸⁸ Hinton, *Women, Social Leadership, and the Second World War*, 152.

¹⁸⁹ Andrews, "'Nationalising Hundreds and Thousands of Women'," 123.

¹⁹⁰ Memo, 5-Mar-46, ALAD to LAD; 1-Jul-46, ALAD to LAD, "Premises, Caversham, Sonning Manor House: Requisitioning."

¹⁹¹ Memo, 5-Mar-46, ALAD to LAD, *ibid*.

¹⁹² Memo, 1-Jul-46, ALAD to LAD; 16-Jul-46, LAD to DDG, *ibid*.

operate the hostel in 1946 when it was at fifty-percent occupancy was £3,328, of which only 35% was recouped through fees.¹⁹³

By September 1945, the Director of the Monitoring Service, the Accommodation Director, and the Controller of the Overseas Services Division were advocating the closure of the Sonning Manor Hostel, with an initial proposed date of Christmas 1945. As part of this push, the argument was made that the Corporation was no longer concerned about staff retention in the Monitoring Service. This sentiment could have been driven by the understanding that the Monitoring operations would cease with the end of the war, or that the recruitment environment made concessions for staff with young children unnecessary. A draft report indicated that “[t]he original justification [had] ceased to exist and it [was] now possible to replace monitors.”¹⁹⁴

The Director of the Monitoring Service also suggested that the BBC could face “external criticism” if Sonning Manor continued to operate.¹⁹⁵ This external criticism may have been merely financial, but also could have been critical pressure from the MOH. As Penny Summerfield noted, the MOH was not in favour of nursery or residential childcare facilities. Ministry officials believed that young mothers were the proper caretakers of young children and opposed establishment of facilities that undermined that principle.¹⁹⁶ Enquires from the MOH in mid-1946 concerning the Sonning Manor Hostel were quickly rebuffed by the BBC. The BBC’s London Area Director indicated that the information the MOH requested was not available, and further that the hostel would be closing shortly – a statement that served to forestall any further questions from the MOH.¹⁹⁷

Outside pressure on the BBC to release the property may have also factored into the BBC’s decision to close Sonning Manor. BBC records indicated that there had been interest in hostel properties in the Reading area, as the Women’s Voluntary Service and the Atomic Energy Research Establishment had both expressed an interest in acquiring either the Great Oaks or the Sonning Manor properties.¹⁹⁸ The BBC also had lengthy conversations about whether to convert the premises into an adult hostel for Monitoring staff.¹⁹⁹ Upon Sonning Manor’s release in May 1947, the Ministry of Works intended to use

¹⁹³ Report, 22-Mar-46, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁴ Memo, 19-Mar-46, LAD to C(OS); Draft, 16-Mar-46, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁵ Memo, 31-Oct-45, DMS to LAD, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁶ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 67-95.

¹⁹⁷ Letter 13-Jun-46, Pearce to Secretary (MOH); 19-Jun-46, MOH to ALAD, "Premises, Caversham, Sonning Manor House: Requisitioning."

¹⁹⁸ Letter, 13-Jan-47, Lady Reading to Ashbridge; 23-Jan-47, Ashbridge to Cockcroft (AERE); 5-Feb-47, Norman (MOW) to Robbins, *ibid*.

¹⁹⁹ Memo, 16-Nov-45, Singer to LAD, *ibid*.

the property as a Civil-Service hostel. This plan was never realised, and the home was derequisitioned in July 1948.²⁰⁰

The repeated delays in closure may have stemmed either from a backlash from the Monitoring staff, or from a fear of unrest among employees who were already jittery over the uncertain future of the Monitoring Service. However, there is only indirect evidence of this in BBC files.²⁰¹ The decision to keep the hostel open past December 1945 was made by then-Director-General, William Haley. Haley based this decision on fairness to the staff involved. Haley stated that the domestic situation of the staff should not be considered a factor in potential redundancies in the looming reorganisation of the Monitoring Service. He insisted that no pressure should be put on them to find other accommodation for the children and declared that the parents should have at least six months' notice of closure. Haley also agreed that the hostel would not accept any more children, which signalled that this childcare concessions to female staff in the Monitoring Service would not long outlast the war.²⁰² The Royal Commission on Equal Pay was also gathering evidence during the 1945 to 1947 period and Haley's actions may have been influenced by the impending release of the report in June 1947.²⁰³

The decision not to accept any new children as residents negatively affected the viability of the hostel, as the number of children dwindled steadily from 1946 to its closure a year later.²⁰⁴ The BBC appeared committed to forestalling any possible childcare benefit and refused to move the children to another hostel when the numbers in residence dipped to just five. Controller of the Overseas Services Division, J.B. Clark, stated that Haley had "... formally agreed with the recommendation that in no circumstances should the children at present at Sonning be moved, even temporarily, to one of the other hostels since this might represent the thin edge of the wedge and we must restrict future hostel accommodation to adults only."²⁰⁵ Potential cost savings were deemed less important than risking further delays in ending the concession.

There are several points to consider in terms of the wartime provision of the nursery hostel. First, the establishment of the hostel seems to have been driven by two factors, the inability to recruit women in a certain age range and to minimise the disruptions caused by the Monitoring Service's transfer from Evesham to Caversham. In mid-1945, when initial

²⁰⁰ Letter, 23-Jan-51, Wodeson (MOW) to Vann, *ibid*.

²⁰¹ Memo, 5-Mar-46, ALAD to LAD, *ibid*.

²⁰² Memo, 16-Nov-45, Singer to LAD, *ibid*.

²⁰³ Smith, "The Politics of Conservative Reform," 652; Smith, "The Problem of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'," 401; Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, Chapter Five.

²⁰⁴ Memo, 1-Jul-46, ALAD to LAD, "Premises, Caversham, Sonning Manor House: Requisitioning."

²⁰⁵ Memo, 6-Jan-47, C(OS) to DMS, *ibid*.

moves were made to close the facility, neither of these two issues were as pressing. Secondly, the future of the Monitoring Service was uncertain as the need for such a service in the post-war era was thought to be limited, particularly as funding for the service originated from the Treasury. There are some indications in the files that more men would be available and that the female staff could be jettisoned. Post-war plans for language services included directly recruiting well-educated men from the countries in question for three- to four-year contracts only.²⁰⁶

A third point to consider is that although the BBC incurred costs in maintaining the nursery hostel at Sonning Manor, the decision to stop this support should not be viewed as a strictly financial decision. As mentioned above, the Corporation provided broad cost-of-living support for staff members who were married with children. The overwhelming amount of this support was paid to married male staff. Single staff members had lost a bid during the war years to claim allowances for dependent family members.²⁰⁷ Under wartime conditions, the BBC had extended nursery support for Monitoring staff under a prescribed situation but appeared unwilling to extend this service for very long after the end of hostilities. In contrast, the family allowances that included payments for dependent wives and children continued after the war until the cost-of-living bonus and the family allowance were consolidated into increased wages. The income threshold for family allowances had been raised from £850 per annum to £1,000 in 1944.²⁰⁸ A 1945 memo indicated that while two percent of women received a family allowance fifty-seven percent of male staff benefitted from the scheme (Table 6.2).²⁰⁹ To end a benefit that was extended to only a small number of staff members whose future with the Corporation was uncertain was much easier than ending one that was extended to close to 2,500 staff members.

²⁰⁶ Notes, 11-Nov-44, SFS; Memo, 21-Nov-44, OSEO to DEurO, ADEurO, & Williams, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 5a."

²⁰⁷ G63/42, 7-Sep-42, "Board of Governors, Papers Incomplete, ."

²⁰⁸ Minutes, 20-Mar-44, "Staff Policy, Staff Association, Meetings, File 1a."

²⁰⁹ Memo, 23-Apr-45, Budd to SAC, "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women."

TABLE 6.2: FAMILY ALLOWANCES FOR STAFF

	Female Staff	Female %	Male Staff	Male %
Number of staff receiving Family Allowances	90	2%	2458	57%
Number of staff not receiving Family Allowances	4548	98%	1853	43%
Total of Staff surveyed	4635		4311	

Some categories of staff including part-time staff, staff receiving marginal allowances, staff in the services, staff whose cost of living increases fall outside trade or industrial rates, and 696 boys and 321 girls under 18 were excluded.²¹⁰

CONCLUSIONS

The expansion of the Overseas Services Division created a large demand for staff at a point in the war where the recruitment pool had shrunk significantly. Despite the fact that the BBC was disadvantaged in terms of recruitment and retention of female and male staff as it was not classified as an essential war industry under the Essential Work Order system, the Corporation was able to use its independence from strict government oversight to its advantage. This flexibility allowed the recruitment of foreign-born staff both in clerical positions and as linguists to staff the rising number of language services in the Overseas, the European, and the Monitoring Services. Government departments and the military, also in need of linguists, were barred from using non-British nationals in these sensitive positions. Other scholars, such as Simon Potter and Laura Johnson, have characterised this facility to utilise alien staff as uncomplicated.²¹¹ While the hiring of alien staff may have been beneficial to the BBC, the recruitment process was far from uncomplicated.

The BBC had to develop a recruitment strategy that allowed it to identify linguists that could act not only as translators, but as announcers and monitors, while ensuring that the organisation maintained tight security over transmissions. Security considerations mandated that supervisory roles, such as Sub-Editor, Editors, Switch Censors, and Language Supervisors, were filled by British citizens. This security measure proved advantageous to some female staff and allowed them to assume roles that were normally designated as male, stretching the boundaries of gendered job categories within the Corporation. The BBC was also able to hire alien women in conscripted age ranges in non-language posts.

The development of this recruitment strategy was not frictionless. While the BBC was free to hire alien staff, the Corporation was required to set up a system that ensured those in their employ had permissions, work permits, and police certification. Exemption

²¹⁰ Memo, 23-Apr-45, Budd to SAC, *ibid*.

²¹¹ Potter, *Broadcasting Empire*, 7; Johnson, "Establishing Broadcast Monitoring " 84.

from government restrictions on the movement of aliens also required intense and lengthy negotiations on the part of BBC administrators. In the end, a separate administrative office was set up to handle liaising with the security services to ensure broadcasting integrity and to vet potential staff members. The threat of outside pressure from the public and members of Parliament meant that these rules were constantly reviewed by an organisation well aware of the damage a single misstep could wreak on its reputation.

Finally, the Overseas Services Division also provided wartime benefits for female staff to ensure smooth functioning of the services. The Monitoring Service allayed staff concerns over billeting problems by establishing a nursery hostel when the service moved from Evesham to Caversham. The primary beneficiaries of this service were female linguists. This concession remained in place in the immediate post-war era as staffing problems persisted. While different challenges would arise for the service after the war, the Overseas Services Division continued to offer wider opportunities for female and alien staff.

Chapter Seven POSTSCRIPT AND CONCLUSIONS

In September 1939, the BBC had been broadcasting for seventeen years. Radio was still the dominant broadcasting technology, as the Television Service, mothballed for the duration, was in an experimental stage – discussed more in the press than seen by the public. The war had allowed the BBC radio to expand into new areas, including greater reach for its news services and enhanced language broadcasting. Radio also embraced more popular entertainment, such as light music and serial dramas, previously eschewed during the Reithian era. Although radio would prove its worth during the war, the service would re-emerge from its wartime success as part of the background of the everyday. After its re-establishment in 1946, the Television Service quickly overtook radio as the dominant broadcasting medium.

The BBC administrators had no inkling that the service they provided would become so integral to people's lives during the war. The original conception of the wartime BBC service was that the Corporation would primarily assist the government in reaching those within its listening range. Within days of Chamberlain's declaration of war, the BBC acknowledged that radio would play a different role to the one envisioned the previous summer. The BBC became a crucial element of the war effort, informing and entertaining Britain, its Empire, and the world. To accomplish this mission BBC programming geared up instead of down. Staff numbers tripled instead of contracting. In order to meet this new mandate, the BBC's recruitment machinery needed to speed up. The department that handled the mechanics of recruitment, Staff Administration, had never processed and hired the number of people that would be required in such a short amount of time. The closest time had been in 1935 during the recruitment phase for the introduction of the Television Service in 1936, which had attracted a large amount of applications for the few posts available. Outside of this exceptional moment, the BBC was unprepared for the wartime recruitment environment.

Hampering recruitment efforts were the increasingly outdated organizational systems that sharply divided female and male jobs within a few broad employment categories. Women overwhelmingly filled clerical roles, although they were not confined to them. However, the apparatus that both recruited and administered female clerical staff was separate from other staff recruitment systems. Conversely, the Engineering Division employed few women, and only in the clerical grades, and therefore had no provision for the recruitment of female technical staff. Other previously gendered categories caused recruiting anomalies when women began replacing men as lift operators, drivers,

messengers, and eventually commissionaires. The previous systems that divided recruitment regimens along gendered lines no longer made organisational sense. New recruitment personnel were introduced to try to manage the stresses and strains. Eventually both new and old ways of functioning were amalgamated in the sweeping 1942 reorganisation.

The 1942 reorganisation had been conceived during the lowest point in the war effort, from the summer of 1940 to the summer of 1942. The need to reimagine the organisational structure was real, but it was also symptomatic of the anxiety caused by the strains of a war that the allies were not certain of winning. The push to reorganise reflected a desire to enact changes that would settle internal problems, but somehow also save the country and turn the tide of war. This anxiety manifested itself in other ways. As Christina Baade has chronicled, the response to the popularity of crooners and sentimental music with soldiers led to opposition within the BBC to artists like Vera Lynn. Lynn's ballads were thought to be sapping the morale of the men fighting, unsuccessfully, in North Africa. Martial music and brass bands were seen as a necessary corrective, and in early 1942 crooners were banned from the BBC airwaves.¹ During this same period at the GC&CS, a major reorganisation also occurred. As with the BBC, the GC&CS experienced a period of sustained growth where staff numbers mushroomed, and systems were modernised to streamline operations. The upheaval culminated with the displacement of the GC&CS head in February 1942.² At the BBC, the Director-General also fell. Frederick Ogilvie, who had assumed the role upon John Reith's departure in 1938, was displaced. Ogilvie's downfall is often referred to in a tone reminiscent to Neville Chamberlain – that he was an honourable gentleman, but the wrong man to lead the organisation during wartime.³

For the female staff of the Corporation the 1942 reorganisation meant that the gendered structure of the BBC also dramatically changed. The Women's Establishment ceased to exist, and female clerical staff were now directly administered by the division in which they served. The separate Women's Establishments were sometimes hailed by feminists as providing a chance for advancement for career women. Separate structures for women avoided messy questions regarding women's authority, as the common view was that men would not submit to female leadership. In an all-female environment, women could assume supervisory roles, and advance within an organisation. Studies of the experience in the Civil Service where gender segregation in the workforce was more strictly followed, has led researchers such as Helen Glew to question the advantages of segregated

¹ Baade, *Victory through Harmony*, 131-152.

² Smith, *The Hidden History of Bletchley Park* 34-39.

³ Briggs, *The War of Words*, III, 331-333.

organisational arrangements for women's advancement.⁴ The BBC experience confirms Glew's observations that the Women's Establishment, and the power of the Women Establishment Officer, was not on par with other administrators. Instead of being a mechanism for advancement, women such as Clare Lawson Dick viewed the Women's Establishment as a corral from which escape depended on the largesse of the Women's Establishment Officer. Another potent symbol of women's organisational segregation, the marriage bar, had already disappeared with the start of the war. Initially the marriage bar was suspended only for the duration, with women who married during this time period informed that they would be required to resign at the war's end. This temporary suspension was permanently rescinded in September 1944.

This integration of women into the divisional hierarchy was a logical decision during a time when the evacuation of various departments to locations across the country made central management difficult. Existing Women's Staff Officers were absorbed into the various divisions, with the notion that they would handle matters concerning female staff. The Women Staff Officers assumed the new title Assistants to Administration Officers. In practice, once these women were part of the divisional administration structure, delineations in duties towards staff members would have been difficult to maintain. Although some aspects of recruitment and administration remained gendered, some women shifted immediately into roles that dealt with mixed female and male staff members. Elizabeth Kilham Roberts was one such example.

Kilham Roberts became the Assistant Establishment Officer in the Programme Division, rather than an Assistant to the Administration Officer – a distinction that conferred higher status. Her direct superior, Richard Howgill, considered her to be an able administrator and insisted that he had no intention to limit her exclusively to matters concerning female staff. Having authority over a mixed staff of both women and men, allowed Kilham Roberts the experience necessary for her to advance within the organisation, eventually becoming the Administrative Officer for the Talks Division in 1955. This was a hard-won advancement, as Kilham Roberts unsuccessfully applied many times for promotion in the post-war era. This persistence in the face of rejection, can be seen in the files of other ambitious women in the BBC such as Joanna Spicer and Clare Lawson Dick. However, had Kilham Roberts remained in a strictly gendered structure, her transition into another BBC division would have been hampered by her lack of experience administering staff of both genders.

⁴ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 40-42, 53, 65-93. Glew noted that in the interwar period, the Whitley system of staff representations opened up more gender-neutral categories for women in the Civil Service, but the organisation still remained gendered.

The BBC emerged from the war as a much larger organization, one that paid more attention to its audience and sought to entertain as well as inform. During the war, women emerged from behind the scenes to in front of the microphone. Although women had served as programme hosts and entertainers before the war, the expansion of entertainment programmes aimed at soldiers triggered a much more widespread use of women particularly in message programmes. While this type of programming would have limited appeal in peacetime, more openness to light entertainment allowed a greater scope to hearing women's voices on the air. However, as had been recognised when the Television Hostesses Elizabeth Cowell and Jasmine Bligh were hired in the 1930s, programme hosts might have limited appeal. In the post-war era both female and male programme hosts were switched to programme contracts, which were often more lucrative.

Public-facing announcing roles underwent a dramatic shift during the war years with the widespread use of female announcers, especially in the regions and on the English-language Overseas Services. When first tried on a national level in 1933, the use of women announcers had been considered too radical a step. After Sheila Borrett's debut and withdrawal in mid-1933, the Board of Governors still broadly supported the idea and blamed the failure of the trial on Borrett's lack of skill. The governors suggested the more low-key approach of testing the reception to female announcers in the regions.⁵ Before the end of 1939, Elizabeth Cowell had begun to announce programmes in Bristol. By mid-1943, there were twenty-four women acting as announcers, with the bulk working in the English-language Overseas Services and in the regions. However, men still dominated on the Home Service.

As part of the wartime innovation, a small select group of men were designated as News Readers. Women continued in announcing roles into the post-war era, and the old reasons used for women's unsuitability, the lack of seriousness and authority in their voice, were shifted onto the role of News Reader.⁶ The exclusion of news reading from general announcing tasks fit into the pattern of de-skilling that was carried out in factory settings to justify any pay differential between women and men.⁷ This comparison does not quite hold in the case of announcers. Not all male announcers were designated as News Readers. General announcing did not become gendered, although women predominated as regional announcers as early as 1943. While some of the justifications for keeping women out of announcing in the interwar years cropped up in the post-war era, announcing itself became a gender-neutral position, whereas only news reading retained a gendered label. What did

⁵ Minutes, 27-Jun-34, Minute 87, "Board of Governors, Minutes," (BBC WAC R1/3/1, 1933-1934).

⁶ "Male Voices Best?," *Staff Association Bulletin*, December 1955, 148.

⁷ Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* 152-153.

not change was the BBC ethos that the announcer should maintain an air of anonymity by avoiding personal publicity. Women who were content to remain out of the limelight were accepted into the ranks.

Women's foray into technical jobs at the BBC left a mixed legacy at the Corporation. Engineering was, and still is, a male-dominated profession. Just as the clerical side of the organisation had been gendered female, the Engineering Division was strictly male. Prior to the war, the Engineering Division held very high standards, and entry level staff members were expected to be well-grounded in engineering theory. Many of the Engineering staff members were university graduates. However, the BBC's use of female Technical Assistants demonstrated that women could be successfully integrated into a variety of roles in Engineering. Many of the operational aspects of the job were similar to telephone switchboard work. The PBX system at the BBC was staffed almost exclusively by women. Women were part of a recruitment strategy that concentrated on identifying women and young men with some educational background in engineering-related fields such as mathematics or physics. The pay scale for both men and women recruited for these roles was the same. Technical Assistants were on paper gender-neutral roles, even if internal distinctions were still made. Although these two groups were confined to mostly operational roles, the responsibilities were no different in scope to the role they had replaced, the Junior Maintenance Engineer. The recruitment of these two groups into Engineering was viewed as a dilution of experience, rather than a dilution of the position.

The solution to deficiencies in experience were alleviated through the introduction of the Engineering Training School. One factor that prevented women from advancement in the Engineering Division was their educational attainment prior to joining the BBC. Most engineering programmes, especially at university level, were closed to women, or were unwelcoming. Many of the young men who trained alongside the female Technical Assistants had not attended university. One of these young men, John Phillips, indicated that without the war, he would never have had the opportunity to become a BBC engineer. Although he had completed a training course in engineering at a local college, Phillips thought that the BBC would have considered his background below their standard.⁸ Again, after the war, there was a clear rejection of hiring young men for entry level positions. An apprenticeship scheme proposed by the BBC Staff Association in the 1950s never gained approval.⁹ However, an apprenticeship programme intended to lure university graduates into the Engineering Division was initiated. Competing in a new environment, radio was seen as an old-fashioned technology, and more cutting-edge fields were available to

⁸ Phillips, interview.

⁹ "Apprenticeship Scheme: A Good Idea But --", *Staff Association Bulletin*, Sept-Oct 1954, 235.

graduates. The apprenticeship programme, along with enhanced wages, was deemed necessary to compete with these more exciting opportunities.¹⁰

Women did remain in the Engineering Division after 1945, although their options were increasingly restricted. The seeds for this exclusionary policy had been sewn at the end of the war. While acknowledging that women deserved to continue in the Engineering Division, a path for promotion for male staff was also put in place. Beginning in 1946, women were transferred off all transmitters, and moved to the studio centres – the largest of these facilities were located in London.¹¹ When redundancies in Engineering were being considered in late 1948, the General Secretary of the Staff Association announced that the possibility of discriminating along gendered lines had been considered and ultimately rejected, as the approximately 200 women still on staff were no “pocket-money girls”.¹² Despite this affirmation of solidarity with their female colleagues, policies had been put in place that made promotion difficult, particularly for staff lacking a deep understanding of theory.

Education, and the control of access to further education, became a way to enforce the quality standards, and ultimately manage promotion. In the Engineering Division, this was accomplished by instituting promotion through examination. Examinations for advancement to the lowest rung of the monthly-paid scale, grade D, were introduced and dropped.¹³ However, a much tougher series of written and oral tests to advance to the next higher grade, Grade C-, were introduced. The C- Exam, as it was known, involved applying and attending a course at the Engineering Training School, and then passing both written and oral exams. Admittance to the three-month training course was rigorous. The application and selection process hinged on the applicant being deemed suitable for promotion.¹⁴ This became a greater hindrance to women staff when jobs that they had been performing in the London Control Room were regraded from D to C-. Instead of improving their chances for promotion, women were forced to train their replacements, and then redeployed. In practice this meant that many of the female staff that were still in the Engineering Division were transferred to the Overseas Services Division at 200 Oxford

¹⁰ Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 418-422.

¹¹ Report, 1946, "Staff Policy, Staff Association, Meetings, File 1b," (BBC WAC R49/666/2, 1946-1947).

¹² T.L. Littlewood, "Redundancy of Technical Assistants," *Staff Association Bulletin Supplement*, October 1948.

¹³ Fletcher, "Engineering Log," 8.

¹⁴ E.W.S. Porter, *ibid.*, 6.

Street, where these jobs had not been regraded.¹⁵ The first woman to pass the C- Exam occurred in December 1952.¹⁶

The exam restrictions also affected male wartime TAs, as attending the course and passing these exams worked to exclude them. Even though young men had been hired at twice the rate of women during the war, the system had always been designed to quickly eliminate the weaker YTs. Those in the Youth-in-Training programme had conditions of employment that would allow them to be cut from the service if they did not achieve promotion to the rank of TA at eighteen. If the young man had joined at the age of fifteen-and-a-half, the lowest age that the BBC would accept, he could be on the job upwards of two-and-a-half years and still be dismissed as unsuitable.¹⁷ In essence, the conditions of employment created a much longer probationary period than that for the role of the Technical Assistants. The same application process and testing regimen would also have excluded any of the less theoretically grounded male TAs.

The BBC initially demonstrated a willingness to expand gender-neutral job categories, especially in technical production capacity, but showed signs of retrenchment as the decade closed. When the Television service restarted in 1946, women were hired to work as Vision Mixers, a post similar to the Production Engineering jobs that women had successfully filled during the war. However, moves were made a few years later that would exclude them from these positions. In 1948, a decision was made that Vision Mixers would also have to be qualified to operate the studio cameras. Camera operation had been designated male-only due to the physical nature of the job duties, and the weight of the cameras, effectively excluding women from technical roles in television. The Staff Association pointed out that technological changes meant that the cameras were no longer heavy and difficult to manoeuvre, but management did not reverse its decision.¹⁸ In excluding women from television production, the Engineering Division fell back on gendered notions of strength and ability rather than actual negative experiences.

Despite the institutional barriers put in place in the post-war era, women's prospects in technical positions were not all bleak. Women continued work as Programme Engineers, retitled Studio Managers, but more importantly, recruitment of women into these posts continued. Esther Rantzen was hired in the 1950s as a Studio Manager for radio.¹⁹ Pamela

¹⁵ "Grading: 78. Continuity Operators", *ibid.*, April-May 1955, 48.

¹⁶ "Photo," 34.

¹⁷ Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 302; Memo, 9-Jul-43, AEEO to C(E), "Departmental, Engineering Division, Technical Assistants."

¹⁸ "Vision P. Ops?", *Staff Association Bulletin*, Oct-Nov 1951, 94; "Women in Tech Ops.," *Staff Association Bulletin*, December 1955, 152.

¹⁹ "Rantzen, Esther," The British Entertainment History Project, <https://historyproject.org.uk/interview/esther-rantzen>.

Creighton answered an advertisement posted in the *Daily Telegraph* in 1955 and began her BBC career as a Studio Manager. She would later go on to be one of the first women News Readers on the World Service in the 1970s.²⁰ However by the 1950s, Programme Engineering had split from the Engineering Department and was in a new Programme Operations department. Rita Jaye who had worked as a TA at an H-Transmitter during the war worked as a Studio Manager for the Overseas Services Division at 200 Oxford Street, only resigning when the shift patterns conflicted with family life.²¹

Although continuing in the Engineering Division became difficult for women, their wartime experiences allowed them to move into other BBC roles that had been filled by men before the war. Mary Garratt, who worked in the London Control Room, became a Presentation Assistant in the Overseas Service Division. Garratt had almost resigned in despair when she returned from a production training course only to find that her post had been eliminated while she was at the course. Presentation Assistants worked with the announcers writing scripts and performing various voice work.²² Another former TA, Denise Tate, first moved to the London Recording Unit and then into a role as Programme Reporter. Prior to the war Programme Reporters had also been a male domain.²³ Finally, women did remain in the Engineering Division even though the division ceased recruiting women as TAs. When Edward Pawley wrote his reference work on BBC Engineering in 1971, seventeen women who had entered the Engineering ranks during the war were still working in the division.²⁴

The BBC Engineering Division chose to limit women's roles in the post-war era, regardless of their positive wartime experience. The section where women were most successful and prevalent, Programme Engineering, was jettisoned from Engineering Division. Programme Engineering never entirely meshed with the Engineering Division, only having been incorporated into the division in 1939. Some of the continuing problems of integration may have been down to the fact that Programme Engineering was much less of a pure engineering role and relied on creativity. Notably, Programme Engineers did not need to have studied engineering to perform successfully in the role. These problems of the post-war Engineering Division highlight the fact that engineering could be a bit staid. All of the top managers in the division had joined the Corporation in the 1920s. Noel Ashbridge, Rowland Wynn, and Harold Bishop continued on in positions of authority until

²⁰ Allison Johnston, "The BBC's Pamela Creighton," *The Monitoring Times*, March 1990, 22.

²¹ Rita Jaye, "Memories of 200 Oxford Street by Rita Jaye, Nee Barnsley," <http://www.orbem.co.uk/oxfordst/jaye.htm>.

²² Garratt, interview.

²³ Meekums, interview.

²⁴ Pawley, *BBC Engineering* 302.

the 1950s and 1960s. Ashbridge retired in 1952, Wynn in 1960 as Chief Engineer, and Bishop remained head of Engineering until 1962.

The war years challenged the BBC's relationship with different government ministries. The thorniest relationship emerged between the BBC and the MOLNS. The source of much of this tension was a misunderstanding by the MOLNS of BBC procedure and organisational structure. Coupled with the very difficult labour market, disagreements between the two entities seemed inevitable. One of the most contentious areas concerned retention of staff. Some of the disputes centred on the ambiguous job titles women held, and the differences between BBC and Civil Service practice. This disconnect was particularly difficult for women labelled as 'clerks'. The MOLNS saw clerks as low-level employees who required no special qualifications. There is also the possibility that the Civil Service might have viewed the indispensability of BBC clerks differently if the posts in question were held by men. In Civil Service experience, women clerks were confined largely to routine matters.²⁵ As demonstrated in Chapter Three, some BBC shorthand typists were expected to act as deputies for their supervisors. Some clerical roles combined with more responsible positions or technical positions without any questions arising regarding women's qualifications (page 93). Some women who had moved out of clerical roles were expected to act as their own secretaries, an expectation that predated the wartime labour shortage.²⁶

Some women in responsible positions held no job title. Eleanor Shelmerdine, who administered the BBC vetting system, had a nominal title of Assistant – a label never noted on internal memos.²⁷ She was routinely addressed as Miss Shelmerdine rather than her abbreviated title, suggesting an outside relationship to the hierarchy, rather than being an important part of the wartime security structure. As noted above regarding Elizabeth Kilham Roberts, being an Assistant in your own right, rather than an Assistant to a particular manager, conveyed a higher status. Personal service to an individual was not valued as highly as service to the department or division. Further research on this aspect of the organisational hierarchy would provide insight into the origins of BBC structure. Secretarial staff could rise to a high status and have control over some of the day-to-day aspects of the organisation. However, these types of roles were not generally viewed in comparable organisations as ones that necessitated applying judgement. This function of judgement leads back to both the operational/theoretical divide that existed in the Engineering Division, and the MOLNS belief that women clerical staff did not exercise judgement in their

²⁵ Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation*, 42-44.

²⁶ Memo, 2-Feb-38, TelEx to WSA, "Left Staff, Gilbert, Joan Fitz-Henry."; Memo, 9-Feb-44, OSEO to AppO, "Left Staff, Hillier, Stella Wedderburn Ogilvie, File 1."

²⁷ Internal documents rarely referred to individuals by name. Even the Director-General was referred to as D.G.

daily activities and were therefore expendable. The functioning of the BBC depended on employing and promoting women in clerical positions who applied judgement as part of their daily routine. Likewise, women in operational roles in BBC Engineering were deemed highly competent as they used judgement on the job, even if the reasoning was not based in theoretical terms.

The wartime recruitment strategies of the BBC noticeably included the use of women, but also other categories of labour that could be considered as 'othered'. For the Engineering Division this was young men. In other parts of the organisation, foreign staff filled this role. The reference could also easily be applied to those hired with lower educational attainment, which could assume class dimensions. Throughout the war the BBC often referred to changes in recruitment standards by obliquely citing issues of 'quality'. In all parts of the organisation, the war necessitated hiring individuals below normally required experience and educational levels. Although these standards were not specifically articulated, the BBC preferred to hire experienced personnel in most divisions, and quality could be expected to include employing individuals with particular expertise. These expectations can be contrasted with the Civil Service which rarely employed individuals above the entry level; entry points were confined to narrow age ranges and grades and based on performance on a written exam. Civil Service experience was acquired on-the-job. For the BBC Engineering Division, training boys and women in the principles of radio engineering was viewed as dilution of experience rather than the task. The institution of the Secretarial Training Centre was also intended to deal with this dilution of experience. The Secretarial Training Centre only offered training to develop skills already acquired elsewhere. Courses on shorthand and typing were to improve speed not skill. The main purpose of the Centre was to acquaint younger women with the office etiquette that they had not yet learned on the job.

The class dimensions were also rooted in educational expectations. The female producers and administrators highlighted in Chapter Two all had university backgrounds (page 60). At a time when few people attended university, this is striking. Women recruited into the Engineering Division were expected to have studied mathematics and science subjects at school and to have acquired a school-leaving certificate. Office workers were expected to have a good level of education, and the BBC appeared to be even choosier than most employers. In his discussion on the development of the Civil Service as a government machine, Jon Agar indicated that women came to dominate in clerical work as they were educated to the appropriate level, and usually from a higher class than the male copyists they replaced. Women were also viewed as more cost-effective as they could be paid less and were not considered to be ambitious. Social expectations surrounding

marriage and childbearing also meant that other priorities competed with career advancements, effectively limiting their working lives.²⁸

The foreign-born linguists hired for the Overseas Services Division and the European Services Division were another source of labour that in peacetime would have had limited access to BBC posts. Many of the wartime staff were refugees from the Continent and had held positions of importance in their own countries and so had a greater level of expertise than the BBC would have had access to outside of wartime.²⁹ However, female employees had greater opportunities for promotion over foreign-born staff working in the same areas. This advantage was primarily due to the confluence of nationality and marriage. Women's citizenship was gained, or lost, through marriage. A woman who had married a British citizen gained citizenship through her husband, but a British woman also lost her British status through marriage. The only avenue for a foreign-born man to change citizenship status was through naturalisation. During the war, British-born women who had lost their citizenship through marriage were temporarily considered British citizens. Responsible positions such as Editor, Sub-Editor, Language Supervisors, and Switch Censors were reserved for British nationals. Naturalised women, as well as British women married to foreign nationals, had enhanced opportunities for advancement as not enough qualified British men were available. Although men who had become naturalised citizens were also promoted into these roles, this pool of male staff remained small as naturalised males were subject to conscription, and naturalisation was suspended during the war. Administrators in the Overseas and European Services Divisions also viewed long-term expatriates as out of touch with the political and economic situation from their home countries and preferred not to hire them.

This advantage of nationality would quickly reverse in the changed recruitment atmosphere that emerged after the war. Any advantages that women held due to the ambiguous nature of their nationality were wiped away by the MOLNS's strict re-assertion of nationality rules. In the European Services Division, one woman who had performed well during the war was suddenly "not up to the standard of announcing required".³⁰ Her status was listed as "Dutch by birth and British by marriage" with the repeated assertion that her naturalised status was less than that of someone British-born. She was made redundant and replaced by a male Dutch national.³¹ British-born women who had married foreign

²⁸ Agar, *The Government Machine*, 62-63.

²⁹ Renier and Rubinstein, *Assigned to Listen*, 72.

³⁰ Interview, 24-Jan-46, Crookenden (MOLNS) and Macrae, "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 6a," (BBC WAC R49/11/8, 1946).

³¹ Interview, 24-Jan-46, Crookenden (MOLNS) and Macrae; Memo, 26-Mar-46, Shelmerdine to EO(OS), *ibid*. Shelmerdine and Macrae disputed nationality claims for two women as they were not British-born, and only British by marriage.

nationals were now also disadvantaged, as the nervousness of hiring Brigit Maas, even temporarily, indicated. In the time period between the end of the war and the end of restrictions on hiring foreign nationals at the BBC in 1951, the BBC did assist some staff in becoming naturalised.³² A few of the male staff who were aliens made a permanent place for themselves within the BBC. Martin Esslin who had started in the Monitoring Service would rise to become head of Drama, and Wolfgang Rilla would become a Producer, and after leaving the BBC, a movie director. However, these successes for foreign male staff were more limited than British women's inroads into producing and administration.

Another benefit that had helped women in the Monitoring Service balance family obligations with employment had been the nursery hostel at Sonning Manor. The initial swift move to remove the provision in 1945 by the Director of the Overseas Services Division was delayed but ultimately implemented less than two years after the war ended. Female staff were required during this period as conscription for men was still in effect and resettlement of returning BBC staff members from the services went on into the 1950s. The quick ending of this benefit would have sent a strong message to female Monitoring Service staff that their retention was not a priority. Expenditure concerns and the uncertain future of the Monitoring Service may have played a role in management's decision to close the hostel. However, the fact that precedent, rather than cost, allowed the nursery hostel to stay open is telling.

One of the reasons used to justify the closing of the nursery hostel was the threat of external pressure. While this might have been a reference to press coverage, or questions in Parliament, the external pressure may have also come from the Civil Service. Letters were sent to the BBC from government ministries requesting information concerning employment practice, including one on the marriage bar in July 1945, and the one that mentioned the hostel at Sonning Manor in June 1946. While these requests may have been a genuine survey, they might also have represented a form of external pressure. The reaction by the BBC to the questions from the Ministry of Health regarding the provision of child care, in particular, suggested information gathering was an informal tactic used by the government. The 1945 letter concerning the marriage bar and maternity benefits was also received cautiously. The BBC took twenty days to respond, suggesting consultation regarding the response occurred.³³ In 1939, when the marriage bar was causing dissension at the BBC, the Treasury had opposed suggestions that the BBC might lift the bar. The 1945 response from Sidney Budd of behalf of the Staff Administration was concise, stating the BBC would

³² "Staff Policy, Aliens, Employment of, File 6b," (BBC WAC R49/11/9, 1946), 10-14; "Beveridge Committee's Recommendations," *Staff Association Bulletin*, Jan-Feb 1951.

³³ Letter, 7-Jul-45, Hackett to Budd; 26-Jul-45, Budd to Hackett, "Staff Policy, Married Women Policy, File 3."

not reimpose a marriage bar unless it was found to be against public policy. Although the BBC position left open the possibility that they would reinstitute the bar if required to do so, the decision on ending the bar had taken place in 1944 without any apparent reference to the Civil Service. This suggests that the Corporation had decided to set its own agenda.

Over the course of the 1930s, BBC policy had become entwined with Civil Service policy and practice. This had included the adoption of a marriage bar that remained divisive and unpopular within the organisation. The war saw the BBC trapped in an uneven relationship with the MOLNS. The government controlled the Corporation's access both to labour and to the purse strings. Although the BBC felt it was making a vital contribution to the war effort, its status as a public corporation, rather than a government department, worked against the Corporation, particularly with regard to recruitment. The BBC had to constantly negotiate with the MOLNS to retain female and male staff members, and this process would prove divisive. The government never really recognised the BBC as a vital part of the war effort. Although the Engineering Division used better negotiating tactics for the retention of female staff than the Administration Division, Noel Ashbridge's pleas to exempt all male Engineering staff failed to win approval. Even with the recruitment of female technicians, the MOLNS's rulings on the age range that could be hired, immobile women aged over twenty-five and mobile women aged over thirty-one, slowed the division's use of female technicians. To compensate, the BBC not only drew on female staff outside of restricted categories, married women with young children, and women with ambiguous nationality, but also young men and foreign nationals. The tensions over staffing created a distance between the Civil Service and the BBC which allowed them to strike their own policy decision, such as with formally ending the marriage bar in September 1944.

Although some areas of the BBC advanced more than others, changes in the organisational structure during the Second World War had an overall positive effect on women within its ranks. The war brought to an end an inefficient system of placing female clerical staff in a separate Women's Establishment and normalised their positions within divisional hierarchies. This elimination of a gendered sphere did not displace a locus of female power within the organisation. Women could still aim to achieve a responsible post in the administrative hierarchy, although the top posts were still out of reach. The chance to work within other divisions provided women with more varied experience, and the possibility of reaching higher posts both inside and outside their divisions. Although some women had risen to departments heads in the interwar years, the removal of the gendered structure opened up more opportunities for promotion. The focus on a lack of women in the top management roles has possibly overlooked research into women in middle-management roles and is a rich area for further research.

Although the organisation continued to treat women's promotion prospects to the highest levels of the organisation with some scepticism, and sometimes outright discrimination, there is evidence that within the organisation the question of fairness was being raised and evaluated. Whether or not this internal questioning was sustained into the 1950s and 1960s is a subject of another enquiry. Women were accepted in the role of announcer with few exceptions. Although the question of gendered roles had shifted to that of News Reader, the appropriateness of women announcers was no longer in question. Although the gains in the Engineering Division were mixed, women did gain entry into technical positions on the programming side as Studio Managers, Programme Reporters, and Presentations Assistants. The result was a more gender-balanced organisation. While not all managers were supportive of female staff or questioning of the systems that kept them out of the top jobs, there were men and women within the Corporation that felt women deserved to be recognised and promoted. Finally, the BBC emerged from the war a more confident organisation that had a greater reach than its pre-war configuration. Although the Treasury had a measure of control over the purse strings, this confidence allowed the BBC greater independence of action from the government. While structural alterations incorporated women more fully into the BBC hierarchy, whether or not this allowed them a greater voice in the functioning of the Corporation in the years that followed is open to debate.

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Appendix One ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWEES

TABLE A1.1: INTERVIEWS AND CONTACTS

Name of Interviewee	BBC Division	Type of Interview	Date of Interview
Mary Garratt	Engineering	In Person	January 2015
Norma Gilbert Marshall	Public Relations	In Person	January 2015
Elizabeth Tofield Forty	London Administration	In Person	February 2015
John Philips	Engineering	In Person	March 2015
Olga Bergman Easy	Monitoring, London	In Person	April 2015
Mary Anderson Craig	Music Library	In Person	April 2015
Richard Craig	Engineering	In Person	April 2015
Doreen Pout Bouskill	Engineering	Telephone	November 2014
Denise Tate Meekums	Engineering	Telephone	February 2015
Rita Barnsley Jaye	Engineering	Skype	May 2016
Kitty Kaufmann Schaefer	Monitoring H Unit	Skype	March 2018
Bill Rhodes	Post-War Engineering	Email Communication	December 2014
Dorothy May	Administration	Email Communication	January 2015
Jeff Cant	Engineering	Written Response	November 2014

Appendix Two NOTES ON EQUAL PAY AT THE BBC

During the Second World War there was a sustained campaign pushing for equal pay for women, which included women and men across the political spectrum. There is little information in the BBC files on the on-going movement, and no mentions of the efforts were recorded in the BBC Staff (Wartime) Association meetings. The efforts to secure equal pay for women culminated with the passage of an amendment to a bill on education and would have guaranteed equal pay for teachers. The Prime Minister, Winston Churchill, forced a vote of no confidence to defeat the measure. Although the measure did not pass, a Royal Commission on Equal Pay was set up and reported its findings in 1946.¹ The BBC was asked to submit a report to the committee. The data collection for the report to the Royal Commission on Equal Pay caused some BBC staff to admit that although generally women and men were paid equally there were some exceptions. A final note, the initial report indicated that as of 30 December 1944, there were 12,600 BBC employees and that 3,200 were men and 9,400 were women. Subsequent information suggested that the ratio of female to male staff was roughly equal. Attempts to determine how the initial figures were derived have been unsuccessful.²

The weekly-paid House Staff – cleaners, caterers, and commissionaires – offered the clearest demonstration of gendered pay distinctions at the BBC. In 1943 when drawing up an initial report for the Royal Commission on Equal Pay, BBC managers acknowledged that most of the pay discrepancies that existed between men and women performing essentially the same tasks occurred in the manual grades. However, the Corporation justified continuing these disparities using sometimes arbitrary criteria. Male cloakroom attendants were paid more than female ones with no reason given. Male cleaners were paid more as they cleaned areas that were above the shoulders, while women cleaned areas below the shoulders. Male porters earned more because they were officially required to lift heavier items. Male lift operators operated the larger lifts, and therefore received higher pay, and men also received higher pay for driving a larger variety of vehicles.³ In each of these instances the differential was based on a BBC decision that prevented women from performing the tasks that received higher pay. In the report, there were two areas under review where the pay discrepancy between male and female staff was being examined with the intention of equalising pay or benefits. Girl and boy messengers were paid the same,

¹ Smith, "The Problem of 'Equal Pay for Equal Work'," 652-672.

² Letter, 9-Feb-45, Haley to Secretary, Royal Commission on Equal Pay, "Staff Policy, Equal Pay for Men and Women."

³ Memo, 2-Apr-43, DSA to Chadwick, *ibid*.

but only the boys received a clothing allowance. The one pay differential that was promptly remedied was that of Tape Room Messenger.⁴

One lasting effect of this gendered job division was that wherever women dominated in a job category, they were often described as secretaries even when the job was not a secretarial position. In writing about working at the BBC in the immediate post-war era, producer Rayner Heppenstall designated women who were doing the work of an assistant producer as the Producer's Secretary.⁵ Stella Hillier, who started her BBC career in 1937 as Secretary to Features Producers Francis Dillon and Lance Sieveking, routinely operated recording equipment and other production tasks when in this position.⁶ During the war, the BBC designated Clare Lawson Dick in *Radio Times* as a BBC Secretary when she was serving as a Programme Correspondence Assistant.⁷ Whether or not this designation trivialised these women's roles within the Corporation is unknowable. Lawson Dick bristled over her job title as internally she had been referred to as a Minuting Clerk instead of Programme Correspondence Assistant, as minuting highly confidential Overseas Control Board meetings was only a small portion of her job. Lawson Dick viewed the designation of Assistant preferable to that of Clerk, and her personnel file confirmed that Assistants were of a higher status.⁸ These tendencies highlighted the way in which the corporate structure was itself gendered. In this case, the term secretary connoted a position that was predominantly, or exclusively, reserved for women despite the fact that secretarial roles were monthly-paid roles and outside the ambit of the Women's Establishment.

⁴ Memo, 20-Apr-44, Macrae to DSA, *ibid*.

⁵ Heppenstall, *Portrait of the Artist*, 34.

⁶ Memo, 16-Apr-42, WREx to WEO, "Left Staff, Hillier, Stella Wedderburn Ogilvie, File 1."

⁷ Lawson Dick, "1941 with the BBC - No. 9."

⁸ Memo Extract, 24-Nov-41, SOP to WEO; Memo, 28-Jan-42, Assistant Director, Secretariat to Beardshaw; 2-Feb-42, Supervisor of Overseas Planning Liaison to OCEx, "Left Staff, Dick, Clare Lawson."

Appendix Three WOMEN AND THE CALL-UP – MONTHLY-PAID STAFF IN THE OVERSEAS SERVICES AND EUROPEAN SERVICES DIVISION

At the request of the MOLNS, the BBC collected information on women in their employ who were between the ages of nineteen and thirty to determine whether or not they could be released for essential wartime work or for the services. The original request had been for those in the lower weekly-paid grades. Women on the monthly-paid staff were initially assumed to have special qualifications. The MOLNS did eventually ask the BBC to consider releasing monthly-paid female staff. As the request was for those eligible for conscription, foreign staff members were not included unless they were naturalized or were British-born and had lost their citizenship through marriage. Below are two charts that note the number of women in supervisory roles (Table A3.1) and women working as monthly-paid foreign-language Monitors (Table A3.2). This is not a complete list as women outside the age ranges along with foreign nationals were excluded.

TABLE A3.1 MONTHLY-PAID WOMEN STAFF IN SUPERVISORY ROLES IN THE LANGUAGE SERVICES⁹

Surname	Job Title	Year Born	Grade	Base	Nationality
Mrs R.C. Baikie	Sub-Editor, Near East News	1916	C	Evesham	British
Mrs O.K. Bolz*	Senior Sub-Editor, Monitoring	1911	B1	Evesham	Naturalized
Miss E.A.P. Caird	Sub-Editor	1915	C	London	British
Miss M.L.S. Fisher	Head of the French/Belgian, Scandinavian and Latin/European Section, London Transcription Service	1913	B1	London	British
Miss S. Grant Duff	Czech Editor	1913	B-	London	British
Miss B.S. Knott	Senior Organising Supervisor, Monitoring	1916	B1	Evesham	British
Mrs A. Michael	Head, Polish and Czech Section, London Transcription Service			London	Naturalized
Mrs L. Morrell	Finnish Sub-Editorial Assistant	1911	C	London	British
Miss J. Prosdick	European Sub-Editor	1914		Evesham	British
Mrs O.M. Renier*	Reference Supervisor	1913	B1-	Evesham	Dutch
Miss M.V. Rink	Supervisor, Monitoring	1912	B1-	Evesham	British
Miss M. Sampson	Acting Swedish Editor	1911	C	London	British

*Renier and Bolz were both British-born women married to foreign nationals.

⁹ "Staff Policy, Women Staff, Call up Lists, File 1a," (BBC WAC R49/942/1, 1942); "Staff Policy, Women Staff, Call up Lists, File 1b," (BBC WAC R49/942/2, 1942).

TABLE A3.2: MONTHLY-PAID WOMEN STAFF IN THE MONITORING SERVICE¹⁰

Surname	Job Title	Year Born	Grade	Base	Nationality
Miss L.M. Adler	Monitor	1912	D	Evesham	Unknown
Miss B. Aicher	Monitor	1913	D	Evesham	Naturalised
Mrs N.N. Burch	Russian Monitor	1913	D	Evesham	Naturalised
Miss J.H. Charleton	Gaelic Monitor	1915	D	Evesham	British
Miss J.R.J. de Heergaard	Monitor	1914	D	Evesham	Danish
Miss I.M. De Madariaga	Monitor	1919	D	Evesham	British
Mrs A.M. Figgures	Monitor, M Unit	1916	B	Evesham	Naturalised
Miss T. Finkelstein	Monitor, Y Unit	1917	D	Evesham	Latvian
Miss A. Frank	Monitor	1918	D	Evesham	German
Miss J.E. Prosdick*	Monitor, Y Unit	1914	D	Evesham	British
Mrs I. Futorian	Monitor	1911	D	Evesham	Unknown
Mrs V. Gillespy	German Monitor	1912	C	Evesham	British
Miss M.R.K.T. Hansen	Monitor	1911	D	Evesham	Unknown
Miss A. Kramer	Monitor	1918	D	Evesham	Czech
Mrs E.M. Kramer	Monitor, Y Unit	1915	D	Evesham	British
Miss A.J. Nicolaoff	Russian Monitor, M Unit	1915	D	Evesham	Greek
Mrs M.E. Powell	Monitor	1915	D	Evesham	British
Mrs A.A. Rittener	Finnish-Swedish Monitor	1914	D	Evesham	Naturalised
Mrs S.F. Vieuille	Monitor	1913	D	Evesham	Naturalised

*Prosdick is also on the supervisory chart as she was promoted during the period when the data was collected.

¹⁰ "Staff Policy, Women Staff, Call up Lists, File 1a."; "Staff Policy, Women Staff, Call up Lists, File 1b."