‘Careers for Women’: BBC Women’s Radio Programmes and the ‘Professional’, 1923–1955

ABSTRACT
In May 1923, the fledgling BBC launched its first daily programme to be aimed at a female audience, the short-lived *Women’s Hour*. A popular feature was talks on careers: museum curator, almoner, optician, solicitor, athletics organiser were amongst the newly possible professions that were discussed. By the 1930s, female politicians, lawyers and childcare specialists were discussing their work as established experts, while during the Second World War, naval architects, photographers and life insurance underwriters were lauded as novel female jobs. *Woman’s Hour,* which was launched in 1946, as well as frequently featuring expert female guests, grappled with a post-war landscape where a return to a career was becoming a possibility for women, once children were grown. This article uses the BBC’s early radio programmes for women as a means to explore the ways in which professional women were represented to its listening public, over a period of thirty-two years.

……

On 28 September 1923, the first edition of a new weekly publication hit the newsstands of the UK, *Radio Times*, the mouthpiece of the recently established British Broadcasting Company. The main purpose of *Radio Times* was to list the programmes that could be heard that week on the wireless, an astonishing new medium that was gradually becoming available to the British public. One of the programmes listed for that first week, for Thursday 4 October, was *Women’s Hour* (not to be confused with today’s *Woman’s Hour*) which was broadcast at 5pm and which included a talk on’ Careers: Journalism for Women’ by Miss Edith Shackleton. Shackleton’s talk, which will be explored in more detail later, is an early example of a large number of talks about women’s employment that would be broadcast on the BBC over the ensuing decades and this article uses radio programmes aimed at a female audience as a means of exploring the representation of working women in Britain during a thirty-two-year period. In particular, it focusses on middle-class professional and ‘career’ women in the interwar and post-war years. Newspapers and magazines are well established tools of archival research for women’s employment yet BBC radio programmes, which by the 1930s were being received into almost every home in the UK, are rarely explored.[1]

There has been growing academic interest in professional women’s work in the time period under consideration here, which saw increasing acceptance of women in these roles.[2] The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act of December 1919, although flawed, had required traditional occupations such as law, engineering, veterinary surgery and accountancy to open their doors to women.[3] There was also an influx of women into new and often surprising occupations. In her 1928 book *Women’s Work in Modern England,* Vera Brittain pinpointed e.g., advertising, auctioneering, political organising, medical gymnastics and aviation amongst the potential careers for women.[4] Other writers of the late 1920s and 1930s, such as Ray Strachey, Vyrnwy Biscoe, Margaret Cole and Dorothy Hughes, were also fascinated by the growing army of young women who were taking up professional work,

producing books to support and cater to this new market.[5] Adrian Bingham has written of a wider national interest, whipped up in the newspaper press, about female 'pioneers' who were gaining a foothold in the country's workplaces while Jane Robinson's book, *Ladies Don't Climb Ladders* takes, as its core theme, the 'pioneering adventures' of these first professionals.[6] However, for many professional women in the 1920s and 1930s, their lives remained blighted by the ubiquitous marriage bar that was retained in many areas of work including teaching, nursing, banking and the civil service. There was also endemic unequal pay and unequal promotional opportunities. An enduring impact of the Second World War was not only an end to most marriage bars but also a growing acceptance of part-time work for women as well as the possibility of returning to work when family responsibilities had lessened.[7] By 1955, the idea of the 'dual role' for women, was becoming established.[8]

The BBC itself provides a useful case-study in the employment of women in a professional capacity.[9] Equal pay and equal promotional opportunities were, ostensibly, offered and even after the introduction of a marriage bar in 1932, 'career' women were generally exempt.[10] BBC women worked in a wide range of roles: as press officers and photo librarians; as accompanists and exhibition organisers; as editors and advertising representatives, to name but a few.[11] The new profession of broadcasting, whether as a creator of programmes or a voice on the airwaves, was also one where women excelled.[12] As 'Talks Assistants' - later to be called Producers - women had responsibility for the BBC's female-orientated programming. This is significant because a key reason why professional women, and their work, was often featured on British wireless is due to it being a topic that these programme makers were familiar with and had contacts for.

The British Broadcasting Company had been established in October 1922 and by early 1923 was delivering a schedule that included concerts, plays - and talks. Because of the rudimentary nature of broadcast technology, spoken word output was delivered 'live' as pre-prepared, scripted talks, and this would remain largely the case throughout the thirty-two-year period under consideration here. The first talk aimed at women was in March 1923 and the first regular series for women, *Women's Hour*, began on 2 May 1923.[13] The staple of the BBC schedules, *Woman's Hour*, which started in 1946, was thus an extension of a long line of output aimed at female listeners.[14] The convention that women would give up paid employment on marriage, whether obligatory or not, meant that from the start the BBC was gifted a potentially large and captive daytime audience.[15] Not only would this audience grow exponentially, as owning a wireless became increasingly commonplace, but the dominant make-up of listeners would shift from middle to working class.

Laurel Forster has written about the 'long learning curve' for the BBC in its quest to produce radio magazine programmes 'with a wide and genuine appeal for women'.[16] A key problem faced by early wireless, in comparison to print media, was that it broadcast a single programme to everyone. Until 1946, apart from what was transmitted from a local, regional

or later, forces, radio station, which might include some originally generated material, all BBC radio listeners received the same fare.[17] This was very different to the consumers of newspapers and magazines who could choose the journal or periodical that catered to their interests and tastes. Much has been written about the proliferation of women's magazines during the interwar years and beyond, as well as women's pages in newspapers.[18] In many ways, the BBC's talks for women mirrored the content and style of this output. They were also influenced by the BBC ethos to inform, educate and entertain as well as by the predilections and aspirations of the women programme makers themselves. But whereas a woman's magazine or woman's page catered to a self-selecting readership, the producers of woman's talks faced the almost impossible task of satisfying listeners who were rich and poor; single, married and widowed; urban and rural; young and old. Ironically, in terms of employment talks, because of the timing of the broadcasts, the one group who was largely excluded from listening were those who were in paid work.

The Talks Assistant who launched *Women's Hour's* was a former 'Fleet Street' journalist, Mrs Ella Fitzgerald.[19] Details of Fitzgerald's previous career are sparse, but in seeking out potential subject matter for her new programme it is almost certain that she drew on her newspaper experience and networks to find potential speakers. *Women's Hour* consisted of two talks plus music and the topics selected, which included tennis and bridge, reflect an imagined audience of predominantly middle-class women. Most of the output was domestic in nature; cookery, infant care, shopping, fashion and poultry keeping, for instance, but from almost the start it included talks on careers, such as the one by Edith Shackleton which opened this article.[20] The notion that careers as a topic would interest the audience is intriguing because the main body of listeners were women who, by definition, were housewives and so would not be considering work outside the home. As we shall see, the talks appear to have been directed both at mothers, about potential work for their daughters, but also to the wider listenership, as a glimpse into what would have been perceived as new and exciting places to work. This was a fascination that was echoed in the women's press. Writing of the interwar newspaper women's page, Adrian Bingham pinpointed the 'spectacular' array of opportunities for young middle-class women that were presented to readers of the *Daily Express* and *Daily Mail*.[21] In her analysis of *Good Housekeeping,* which was founded in 1922, Alice Wood shows how the journal, as well as situating women in the domestic sphere, 'looked out from the home', which included articles on modern careers.[22] Many of the talks on *Women's Hour* were similarly designed to be outward-looking, so providing respite from domesticity.

Unlike print media, early radio programmes were ephemeral and in the absence of recordings or the retention of scripts, there is sparse extant evidence of what broadcasters actually said.[23] Instead, this article uses the names of contributors and the titles of their talks, as listed in *Radio Times,* as a major source, augmented by BBC Programme Records.[24] So, for example, there is no indication of who Mrs Florence Clark (or Clarke) was, but

between 26 July and 23 August 1923 she gave four career talks on *Women's Hour*: museum curator, house decorator, lady hairdresser and woman solicitor, of which only the hairdresser could be described as a conventional job for women at this time. The breadth of subject matter suggests that Clark(e) was a jobbing journalist who put her hand to a range of topics. Emily L B Forster, on the other hand, who gave three talks (13 September, 20 September and 11 October 1923) on 'The X Ray Operator', 'The Woman Optician' and 'Analytical Chemistry' was the author of a number of careers books; on how to become a dispenser, a doctor and an analytical chemist.[25] According to her published credentials, Forster had been a lecturer at the Westminster College of Pharmacy as well as an analyst at the Metallurgical Laboratory at King's College, London, so was well qualified to speak on medical and scientific topics.[26] She was also representative of women who were moving into what had previously been male areas of work.

Radio Times did not simply provide listings. Alongside the details of BBC programmes, it also included a host of features and articles about broadcasting: the programmes that were being made, the stars who were taking part and the listeners who were tuning in. In addition, it occasionally published talks that had previously been broadcast. Without scripts to compare, it is not certain whether these were full-length or shortened versions, but the wordcount would indicate the latter. Two of *Women's Hour's* career talks were published in this way, and so give an indication of content, tone and style. *Radio Times* for 21 December 1923 included Emily Forster's talk on 'The Woman Optician'. By its objective use of the term 'girl', we can see that it was aimed both at mothers and the wider audience. In this extract, Forster reflects on entry requirements and training:

> The woman optician is very up-to-date. It is of quite recent years that she has made her appearance. It is a career that is only suitable for a girl who has received a good general education… The work is very interesting, but is of a nature that appeals to the studious girl and not to the frivolous one. It is absolutely necessary to be fully qualified and to become so, the examination of either the Worshipful Company of Spectacle Makers (an old guild) or else the British Optical Association must be passed… Whichever examination is taken and whether the study is done at one of the schools, or at a special course at a polytechnic, the actual cost comes to about twenty-four to thirty guineas, which is a very modest sum compared with many other careers.[27]

Edith Shackleton's talk on journalism as a career, which aired on *Women's Hour* on 4 October 1923, appeared two-weeks later in *Radio Times* under the title 'Women who Want to Write'.[28] Shackleton was a well-known journalist whose work encompassed being editor of the *Sunday Herald's* woman's page as well as the first female parliamentary correspondent on a daily paper, *The London Evening Standard*.[29] The extract from her BBC

talk which appeared in *Radio Times* included a personal perspective on the job and its status:

> The ambitions girl who has been attracted to journalism because she is public spirited, or has a deep literary sense, usually begins with a fierce contempt for women's pages or anything that she can label 'feminine tosh', but this, I think, is mistaken, and often it wears off when she is able to gauge the possibilities of her profession more clearly…. It must not be supposed, however, that women never get chances to do general newspaper work at the same terms as men, or that they are incapable of using such chances. There are women reporters on leading London dailies who work exactly as do their male colleagues, and have been doing so with complete success for many years…[30]

These examples reveal a dual aspect to the talks: the specific details of a career for those seeking advice and information but also an aspirational and edifying quality for the wider listenership.

As well as presenting professional women who spoke about their careers, *Women's Hour* also established a core of professional women as subject specialists. So, for example, the second edition of the programme, on 3 May, introduced Mrs CS Peel's 'Kitchen Conversations'. Constance Peel was a prolific cookery writer, almost certainly known to the audience, and she would be a regular speaker throughout the remainder of 1923. Similarly, between 17 July and 26 September 1923, an unnamed 'Woman Chemist' gave a range of 'Toilet Hints for the Holidays. *Women's Hour* also launched the radio career of Marion Cran, FRHS, who gave her first gardening talk on 11 August and who would continue to broadcast on the BBC into the 1930s.[31]

A change came to *Women's Hour* in December 1923 with the establishment by the BBC of a Woman's Advisory Committee (WAC) to oversee the programme, and from this date the number of careers talks increased rapidly.[32] The six female members of WAC could all broadly be described as professional women. Lady Gertrude Denman was Chairman of the National Federation of Women's Institutes; Mrs H.B. Irving (Dorothea Baird) was an actress; Dr Elizabeth Sloan Chesser was a physician; Mrs Violet Cambridge, was a sports administrator and Honorary Secretary of the Women's Amateur Athletic Association; Mrs Hardman Earle had worked for the Ministry of Food and Public Kitchens during the First World War and Miss Evelyn Gates was Editor-in Chief of *The Women's Yearbook*. Each woman was given an area of expertise to oversee, one that aligned with their interests, with Gates given the specific task of representing 'Professional Women'.

During 1924, the WAC met five times with Ella Fitzgerald and other members of the BBC's management team, sharing thoughts and ideas for women's programming and drawing on

their own networks to suggest suitable speakers. The listings in *Radio Times* during this period, and into early 1925, reveal a host of talks on careers, indicating an enthusiasm to showcase novelty and achievement as well as to provide a public service. The careers profiled included an almoner, a buyer, a scribe and illustrator, a doctor, an art auctioneer, an athletics organiser, a dental surgeon, a social worker, a beauty specialist, an art illustrator, a nurse, a surveyor and valuer, work in insurance, medical gymnastics and running a tearoom. In February 1924, there was even a Tuesday series on 'Furnishing Schemes for Professional Women' given by Mrs Gordon Stables. While some of the talks were presented by female writers/ journalists who earned their living by producing copy, most were delivered by women who were practitioners. So, for example, Venetia Stephenson was a barrister (20 February); Margaret Irving was London's only woman tea-taster (30 August); Mrs Millicent Vince ran a successful interior decorating business (16 October); Irene T Martin (later Irene Barclay) was Britain's first female chartered surveyor (24 October); the Hon. Lady Katharine Parsons was co-founder, and President, of the Women's Engineering Society (28 November) while Beatrice Gordon Holmes was a highly successful stock broker (27 January 1925). There were also two talks on telephony and one on secretarial work as a career. The latter, entitled 'Secretarial Vocations' was given by Mrs [Monica] Spencer Munt, founder of the St James Secretarial College for women.

The WAC met for the final time in December 1924 and was formally disbanded in September 1925. This was linked to the demise of *Women's Hour* which, due to pressure from within the WAC, had ceased to be a named entity in March 1924 becoming instead 'talks of general interest but with particular appeal to women'.[33] Without the support of the WAC and with the BBC now pursuing other priorities, talks for women dwindled, with those on careers becoming increasingly scarce. Women's talks would receive a new impetus, however, with the arrival of Hilda Matheson as the BBC's first Director of Talks in January 1927, a post she would hold until her departure from the BBC in early 1932.[34]

Matheson is a compelling example of the new breed of professional women who made their mark in the 1920s and 1930s. University educated, well-connected, hard-working and confident, she had already had several careers before she joined the BBC in September 1926.[35] In January 1927, as the British Broadcasting Company transmuted into the British Broadcasting Corporation (with its royal charter), Hilda Matheson became its first Director of Talks. Matheson was hugely successful in this role, introducing structure and gravitas to the BBC's spoken word broadcasts. She instituted high production values as well as championing output that would inform and educate.[36] It was Matheson who rejuvenated and expanded programming for women, working with the Talks Assistant, Elise Sprott (Ella Fitzgerald had been transferred to a new post in September 1926, as Assistant Editor of the BBC publication, *World Radio*). Sprott, like Fitzgerald before her, was representative of a different kind of professional woman to Matheson, those who were non-university educated but who had furthered their careers though fortitude and determination.[37]

From 1927, the BBC's output aimed at women was streamlined with the introduction of regular weekday afternoon talks at 3.45pm and weekly *Household Talks*, at 5pm, the latter overseen by Elise Sprott. In January 1929, the talks were moved to 10.45am as *Morning Talks*, now broadcast six days a week. One of Matheson's innovations as Talks Director was to institute series of broadcasts, rather than one-off talks. She also insisted on the wider use of the expert 'professional' voice, both in her general talks output and within talks aimed at women, a professionalisation of information and advice that was also evident in women's pages and magazines.[38] So, for example, in the afternoon talks series *The Growing Generation* about bringing up children (first broadcast 10 November 1927) alongside Dr CW Saleeby and Professor VH Mottram, both leaders in their field, were the pioneer of nursery education Margaret Macmillan and Dame Janet Campbell, Senior Medical Officer at the Ministry of Health. The series *Our Girls and Boys* (broadcast from 10 January 1929) was introduced by the MP Margaret Wintringham and included talks by Dr Mabel Brodie, Assistant Medical Inspector to the Ministry of Health and Dr Letitia Fairfield, Divisional Medical Officer to the London County Council (LCC). The series also included several talks on careers, aimed separately at boys and girls. The talk 'Choosing the Best Work for you Girl' given by Frank Maynard Earle (from the Institute of Industrial Psychology) was captioned in *Radio Times*, 'Now that so many girls want to have careers of their own or, at least, to be capable of earning their own living, the problem that faces parents when the children begin to grow up has become more extensive than it used to be.'[39] There were also specific talks on leaving school at fourteen, and at the end of secondary school, again with different talks for girls and boys. The final talk of the series, on 25 April, was given by Vera Brittain, 'the author of a well-known book on careers'.[40] In the absence of a script, it is not possible to know what was discussed, but considering the progression of the earlier talks, it is likely to have been about professional work.

The professional expert voice also featured within the domestic talks which were predominantly produced by Elise Sprott. For instance, Mrs Cottington Taylor, the Director of the Good Housekeeping Institute, gave the first of many *Household Talks* on 27 June 1928; Alison Settle, the Editor of *Vogue*, made her debut on 12 January 1929 speaking on fashions while the dressmaking expert Ethel Hambridge, first appeared on 28 September 1929. A great many other notable professional women came before the microphone including the lawyer Maud Crofts, the electrical engineer Caroline Haslett and the physiologist Professor Winifred Cullis. Professional and personal friends of Hilda Matheson who gave talks included Lettice Fisher, Dame Katharine Furse, Ray Strachey, Winifred Raphael and Nancy Astor. Under the Matheson/ Sprott regime, professional women were no longer viewed as surprising or even as pioneers; there was a sense that they had arrived.

By early 1932, both Matheson and Sprott had moved on from women's talks: Matheson had resigned after falling out with John Reith (Director General of the BBC) and Sprott had been transferred to a new area of work, as the BBC's Women's Press Representative. Margery

Wace, followed by Janet Quigley, now assumed responsibility for the talks aimed at women, as well as wider talks output. Wace and Quigley were of similar background to Matheson: middle-class, Oxbridge educated and with a passion for the educational and democratising possibilities of public service broadcasting.[41] Prior to her arrival at the BBC, Margery Wace had been secretary to the classicist and internationalist, Professor Gilbert Murray while Janet Quigley had worked for the Publicity Department of the Empire Marketing Board. Wace's innovation was to draw on housewives themselves for her domestic talks but she also maintained the use of professional experts, sometimes female, for her programmes, particularly on the topic of health. Janet Quigley, who took over women's talks from Wace in August 1936, continued this trend but was more overt in her inclusion of professional women who spoke more broadly about their work. One of the series she instituted was 'Other Women's Lives', a weekly series of talks broadcast on Saturday mornings (17 April to 3 July 1937) which gave listeners the opportunity to hear about a range of different lived experiences. Within the mix were a number of professional women including Barbara Rothwell Fielding, an artist and dog breeder; Olga Collett, who was Women's Staff Supervisor for ICI; Winifred Holmes, a film critic and Beatrice Singer, a married mother-of-two who had established an employment bureau for educated women.[42] 'Other Women's Lives' was unusual because it also included working-class women's employment. So, for example, Mrs Edward Harvey spoke about the small general store that she ran with her husband in a working-class area of Liverpool (17 April 1937) while Agnes Smith talked about her life as an industrial worker which had begun, aged 12, as a ' doffer ' in a cotton factory, where she later became a weaver (15 May). Prior to this, the main way that working-class women had featured within BBC women's talks was in terms of domestic service.[43]

Janet Quigley also produced the series 'Careers for Girls' which ran from 15 April to 20 May 1939, on which she collaborated with Ray Strachey. Strachey was Secretary of the Women's Employment Federation, whose book *Careers and Openings for Women* had been published in 1935. The programmes were aimed at school leavers – or rather the mothers of school leavers - and looked at six different jobs: nursing, physical training, domestic service, dressmaking, the Civil Service and secretarial work. They included a short talk from a 'young and enthusiastic' member of each area of work, followed by a brief description of the training required, fees, promotion prospects and so on which was given by Ray Strachey. So, for example, on 13 May, 'A Counter Clerk in a London Branch Post Office', spoke about her experience of the Civil Service. The personalised and highly descriptive talk gave colourful anecdotes on a job about which many might think, she concurred, 'what could be duller or more monotonous'. She, however, loved it - and it had prospects:

> Maybe you're one of those people who think a girl gets "stuck" in the post office and that there's no advancement. Well, I can only tell you that from the day of entry into the Service as a junior I've been moving forward all the time. From the parcel counter to the stamp counter – from the stamp counter to the Postal Order counter

> then to the Money Order and Savings Bank desk. Each step bringing increased responsibility and greater experience. If I give satisfaction as a counter office, I can look forward to promotion. First as an assistant supervisor and then as an officer in charge of a branch post office.[44]

Ray Strachey's summing-up echoed these possibilities, and also identified it as a job for those who had the advantages of a post-14 education:

> I think the Civil Service is a really good opening for the right kind of girl. There are several types of clerical opening straight from school at 16. There are other types at 18 and still others for the girl after she leaves University; and wherever a girl gets in, it's open to her to climb up to the very top if she is good enough. Even if she doesn't do this, she's sure of good, safe and progressive employment.

The six careers covered in this 1939 series, although dealt with in professional terms, reveal a narrowing of the horizons of what was seen to be suitable – and realistic – for young women to achieve. This was very different to the array of pioneering careers that were profiled by the BBC in the early and mid-1920s. Women's employment prospects, however, were about to see dramatic change with the onset of the Second World War.

Like the First World War, the Second World War offered a raft of new opportunities for women, as they were called up for war work.[45] For historians, the focus, understandably, tends to be on the large numbers of women who took up employment in factories, in the Forces and in Civil Defence. The trajectory for professional women is less easy to discern. Many of those in traditional careers such as teaching, banking and the Civil Service continued in their jobs and, in light of the call-up of male colleagues, may have been able to secure more senior positions.[46] Middle- and upper-class women who joined the armed forces or who took up civil defence posts, were also more likely to be employed in officer or managerial roles. The BBC, as an organisation, was considerably impacted by the war. It recruited, for the first time, women as engineers and as professional gardeners and it also employed women at its Monitoring Service, which listened-in to overseas broadcasts. Kate Terkanian's work on women in the wartime BBC also highlights women's augmented roles as announcers and senior administrators.[47] The BBC's pivotal role as the 'voice of the nation' during the war has been extensively researched, particularly its importance in providing news, offering information and maintaining morale.[48] In her book *The Echo of War*, Sian Nicholas has shown how British women were particularly targeted through radio via government campaigns such as food advice and fuel economy.[49] The BBC also played an important role both in encouraging women to enlist and in providing morale-boosting programmes for war workers and servicewomen.[50]

Throughout the war, Janet Quigley would remain the main producer of women's talks, which saw a significant change in focus. Alongside broadcasts aimed at women in the home (including a series called *The Kitchen Front*), were a host of programmes aimed at the legion of British women who were now at work.[51] For example, a seven-part series *Women in War*, broadcast on Saturday evenings from 10 August 1940, gave listeners the opportunity to hear, first-hand, from female war workers. The initial programme, billed as 'The A.T.S. and the F.A.N.Y.s speak for themselves' explained that, 'Throughout the country women in uniform or breeches or overalls are serving Britain in her hour of need; and it is the object of this series to bring to the microphone some of the many to speak of their experiences and of the work they are doing'.[52] The series also heard from the Women's Land Army, Red Cross Nurses and VAD's, the WRNS and the WAAF as well as factory workers.[53] The almost identically-named series *Women at War* broadcast from 6 October 1941, began as an entertainment programme for those in the armed forces: the WAAF, WRNS and ATS. It was relaunched In April 1942, with a wider remit that embraced all women in organised war jobs including factory-work, nursing, the Land Army, Ambulance Services and Air Raid Precautions.[54] *Women Can't Do It,* broadcast from 30 September 1942, was described in *Radio Times* as talks 'in which women who are doing work once considered difficult or impossible for them come to the microphone and talk about it'. The series included a foundry manager, a life insurance underwriter, a photographer and a naval architect along with women working as crane drivers, foundry workers, lorry drivers, canal workers and aircraft mechanics. For Sian Nicholas, by highlighting the incongruity of their work, the series consigned the featured women 'to a freakish status'. [55] Nicholas also pointed to the absence, in the series, of women who worked as senior administrators.[56]

All the series mentioned above were specifically for or about women who were in employment. The BBC also broadcast two general talks series for women who were home-based, produced by Janet Quigley, which harked back to the interwar output and which, in many ways, paved the way for *Woman's Hour*. These were *Mostly for Women*, broadcast on Sunday lunchtimes between 12 April 1942 and 8 August 1943 and *Woman's Page* broadcast on Friday evenings between 1 October 1943 and 27 July 1945. As in the pre-war output, these series used the expert professional voice to discuss a range of topics; high-profile women spoke about their jobs and there were also general talks and discussions about women's work. So, for example, *Mostly for Women* welcomed Dame Caroline Haslett as part of a trio describing the Women's Engineering Society conference (3 September 1942); heard from three guests who discussed 'the vexed question of whether women can undertake positions of responsible authority' (3 January 1943) and included an interview with the architect Jane Drew (23 May 1943).

Woman's Page was more overt in its employment focus, reflecting changing times as the country began to look ahead to post-war planning. Examples of items include an unnamed 'Magazine Aunt' describing her job (14 April 1944); two women doctors, one British one

Indian, talking about their work (5 May and 28 July 1944); a talk by a Jamaican member of the WAAF (21 July 1944); Christina Foyle relating her experiences as a bookseller (20 October 1944); Betty Ross on her role as a foreign correspondent (3 November 1944) and Mrs. Corbett-Ashby speaking about the present position of women in the Church (17 November 1944). The programme also heard from women who were a part-time worker on a farm (17 March 1944), a fire-worker (31 March 1944), a ship-painter (7 July) and a flight mechanic (24 November 1944). Wider issues of female employment were addressed more directly, reflecting concerns about its altering scope. The notion that older women might return to work was broached by Lady Margaret D'Arcy in a talk entitled 'Training for a New Job at Forty' (28 January 1944). On 2 June 1944, 'Equal Pay for Equal Work' was discussed in a specially extended edition in which, women and men 'who held strong views on this controversial subject speak their minds'. The following year, with the war in Europe now over, Irene Hilton, the Secretary of the Women's Employment Federation, gave three weekly talks on post-war careers, the first of which was broadcast on 8 June 1945.[57]

It has only been possible to touch briefly on the BBC's wartime programmes for women, which were far more complex and varied than has been portrayed. Although the focus here has been on the professional, there are clearly wider issues to address about how women in the workforce were viewed. Whether it was uniformed servicewoman; those who volunteered for the Land Army or who worked as nurses; the 'upper-class French-educated three-ton lorry driver'; the administrator or the MP, all these women were validated by their war work and given a status that permitted them to broadcast.[58] Janet Quigley, who had overseen most of these programmes, was awarded an MBE for her work in 1944. The following year, in October 1945, she resigned, as her marriage to the writer Kevin Fitzgerald prompted a move to Ireland. This means that she was no longer working at the BBC when *Woman's Hour* was first broadcast on 7 October 1946, on the Light Programme, one of the BBC's three new post-war networks (the two other networks were the Home Service and the Third Programme).[59]

Woman's Hour was launched at a time of great flux for women's employment. While some welcomed demobilisation and the return to domesticity after their stint in the wartime workforce, for others, the camaraderie of work, the escape from the house and the extra money in the pocket were losses that were keenly felt.[60] There was, however, an observable change in attitudes towards married women earning outside the home: part-time work had become more acceptable as had the notion that women might want to expand their horizons, particularly when their children were older. There was also a growing acceptance that middle-class professional women might consider returning to their careers. The marriage bar had been dropped for teachers in 1944 and for Civil Servants in 1946, although it was still unusual for women with young children to work.

A BBC programme 'Women at Work', broadcast on 29 October 1945, touched on a number of pressing employment concerns. According to *Radio Times*, the three guests - the industrial psychologist, Dr Isobel Blain; the President of the TUC, Dame Anne Loughlin; and the managing director of a firm which employed women - discussed issues such as should employers alter working arrangements to make it easier for women to work; could the country afford to manage without the work of married women in industry and agriculture, and whether it would be bad for family life if married women continued to work, even if the hours and arrangements were made easy for them.[61]

With its afternoon time slot, the brand-new *Woman's Hour* was decidedly aimed at an audience of housewives. And, with its transmission on the Light Programme, rather than the Home Service, a large constituent of the audience would have been working-class. Kristin Skoog and Justine Lloyd have written about the early development of *Woman's Hour* and the importance that was placed on women's citizenship; its relationship with listeners; and how it included the voice of ordinary women along with the expert.[62] It also quickly established a large listenership; an estimated four million by 1950. In terms of the production team, at first *Woman's Hour* was overseen by a female 'Organiser', Nest Bradney; in July 1947, Eileen Molony took over as 'Editor' to be succeeded, in January 1948, by Evelyn Gibbs. Janet Quigley returned as editor in June 1950. After a short and rocky start, when the programme was viewed as out of touch and patronising, *Woman's Hour* had been relaunched as a 'new edition' in January 1947. While its key focus remained the domestic, talks on employment were also commonplace. In a memo about the new-style programme, the Director of the Light Programme, Norman Collins, put 'careers' firmly at the start of a list of subject matter that would be dealt with each week.[63]

As the war-time years show, the government was well aware of the power of broadcasting to reach women in the home. During the first few months of 1947, as the country struggled to get back on its feet, *Woman's Hour* was used as a vehicle to encourage a return to the workplace. On 13 March, there was an appeal for part-time nurses and hospital workers, with Dame Katherine Watt, Chief Nursing Officer of the Ministry of Health explaining the need for assistance with staff shortages. On 2 June 1947, George Isaacs MP, the Minister of Labour and National Service, used the programme to repeat – and extend – a broadcast he had given the previous day. 'A Word to Women' was direct in its plea: 'I just want to tell you in the plainest words, the simple truth that the country is badly in need of your help, in the factories… in many services and in agriculture'. Issacs was adamant that the government was not asking women to do jobs usually done by men; nor was he calling on mothers with young children. 'I know that a woman's first duty is to her home… I am not appealing to those whose responsibilities are so great they cannot do an outside job.'[64] The assumptions expressed here reveal, in the government's mind at least, a continuing delineation between men and women's work and that, for married women, their natural domain remained the domestic sphere.[65] *Woman's Hour*, however, was more attune to the broader spectrum of

its audience and took a more open-minded approach to the topic of women and work. A few days after Isaacs' appeal, the programme aired a pre-recorded discussion on the topic 'Can a Woman make a success of Marriage and a Career?' (6 June). The two guests were introduced as Kay McMeekin who 'gave up her career when she married and she now devotes all her time and energies to her home and family' and Jeanne Cooper Foster who 'thinks that it is possible to make a success of marriage and have a career outside the home as well'.[66] Rounding up the debate, the presenter conceded that they had only touched on the main arguments, which were difficult to sum up, but she would try:

> Kay feels that a married woman has a full-time job running her home and rearing her family, and that the Mother at home has a much greater influence on her children, which is of the utmost importance. She has also more time for cultural activities than the career woman. Joanne disagrees with this and feels that having a job gives a woman wider interests and makes her more interesting; that the wife's earnings help to give the children better opportunities in life; and mutual interest in their jobs forms a bond between husband and wife. Finally, that women who have been trained for a job are benefitting the community by practising their skill.

The tone of this talk, celebrating the domestic whilst also looking outward to broader horizons for its audience, is typical of *Woman's Hour* in this period.

Woman's Hour presented working women in a variety of ways. Firstly, a wide range of women spoke about their jobs. Typically, this was in series of talks on different careers which were aimed at mothers with an eye to their daughters, but there were also a great many high-profile guests who reflected on their professional lives. Secondly, as with earlier BBC programmes, *Woman's Hour* was keen to use the expert female voice, again drawing on individuals who were at the top of their profession. Thirdly, as the extract above reveals, there were frequent talks on different aspects of women's work that explored a range of questions and gave listeners insights into the vicissitudes of the employment landscape. Unlike the pre-war output, *Woman's Hour* also occasionally included items about the employment of working-class women, such as a West Wales cockle woman (16 June 1948); women who made pottery (9 December 1948); girls who worked in a linen factory (23 February 1951) and a general discussion on women in industry (16 March 1953).

A series on careers which ran from August to December 1947 is striking in the breadth of occupations it covered, far more varied than those presented in 1939. It included teaching, the stage, journalism, hairdressing, the Civil Service, occupational therapy, film work, dress making and dress design, chiropody and dietetics. Some of those who spoke in this series were women who did these jobs; others were professional broadcasters. So, for example, Kay Beattie, a regular contributor to the programme, gave the talk on the Civil Service (26

August). This was a highly practical talk, with many details about the different grades and examinations, and she ended with a flourish, applauding a sense of progressiveness:

> 'it does seem to me that there's a new spirit in the Civil Service – a loosening up of the once cast-iron grades and a real determination that no talent shall be wasted or left to wilt in a corner. Anyone with brains and ambition, with the sense to work hard and take the opportunities offered, can forge ahead to a responsible worthwhile job and a really good salary.[67]

Beattie also gave two talks on 'Careers for Older Women' on 19 and 26 November, opening the first with the words: 'There are hosts of reasons why a woman of 35 or more should decide to take up a career'.[68] In the first week she spoke about careers that needed very little training; in the second she looked at those that required some investment, such as attending a local technical school. Again, this is in stark contrast to the pre-war years and chimes with new thinking about married women and work.

Other careers series include, during August 1948, the twice weekly 'What it's Like to be…', billed in *Radio Times* as 'a feature about real people at work'. Aimed again at the mothers of girls, the jobs included a librarian, a market gardener, a nursery nurse and a hairdresser. 1951 saw two concurrent series: 'What Job for your Daughter?' and 'My Job'. 'What Job for your Daughter?', was thematic with the main presenter, Irene Hilton of the Women's Employment Federation, addressing topics such as 'safe jobs', with a pension at the end; suggestions for the practical girl; openings and prospects for the girl who was attracted by the social services; dramatic work, art and music; work outdoors; and office work.[69] 'My Job' was a more experiential series with guests such as Mrs MD [Margaret] Law describing her work as Managing Editor of Chambers Encyclopaedia (19 February); Blanche Patch reflecting on her 30 years as secretary to George Bernard Shaw (12 March) and Mary Coules, talking about her role as the first woman sub-editor at Reuters (13 July). Regular series on careers aimed at mothers with work-aged children, continued into the 1950s, such as the 1955 series 'Choosing a Job' which was broadcast during April and May.

The 1951 interviews with Blanche Patch and Mary Coules are examples of prominent female guests on *Woman's Hour* who looked back at long careers, and so provide a link between their status as pre-war pioneers, and the position that they had reached post-war. Barbara de Vitre, who spoke on 'My Life in the Police Force' on 4 August 1948, is another such example. She appeared on the programme soon after her promotion to Assistant Inspector of Constabulary, the first woman in Britain to hold such a senior post. In her talk, she reflected on the tough times she had faced as a new female recruit in 1928, but she also spoke of her current role and status:

> When I was appointed the first woman Assistant Inspector of Constabulary a little while ago, it was really a mark of recognition by the Home Office of the importance of the work women police can do. Now my job is to advise the local authorities how the women police in their Force can best be used to do the work in their locality. Another thing I'm interested in is getting women instructors appointed who can, from their own experience, give the new women recruits advice on the work they have to do.[70]

Oher examples of eminent women who spoke about their long professional lives include Florence Hancock of the TUC (17 January 1949); the lawyer Margaret Kidd (14 March 1949) and the physiologist, Professor Winifred Cullis (30 May 1949). The numbers of such guests would increase greatly from September 1950, with the introduction of the regular feature 'Guest of the Week'. This was one of many changes to the programme initiated by Janet Quigley, following her return as editor in June 1950. What is arresting about the original list of contributors is how many were pioneers at the forefront of their calling or career. It seems as though Quigley was eager for her audience to discover just how many women in Britain now held impressive posts, catching-up with the five years that she had been away. In the fifteen months to the close of 1951 guests included: the MPs Elaine Burton and Thelma Cazelet Keir; the engineer Sheila Leather; the administrator, Violet Markham; the headmistress, Dame Dorothy Brock; the film director, Mary Field; the social reformer, Dame Rachel Crowdy; the Chairman of National Federation of Women's Institutes, Lady Brunner; the prison administrator, Dame Lillian Barker; the President of the National Council of Women, Muriel Lefroy; the senior civil servant, Dame Evelyn Sharp, and the florist Constance Spry.[71] It is worth pointing out that most, though not all, of the women mentioned here were unmarried, Evelyn Sharp being one of them.

In her Guest of the Week talk, on 28 November 1951, Evelyn Sharp introduced herself as 'Deputy Secretary in one of the big Government Departments, the Ministry of Housing and Local Government', explaining that her work was predominantly linked to town and country planning. The bulk of her talk, though, was about her experience of being a woman in a senior position in the Civil Service:

> Because I happen to hold an important post, near the top of a Service which includes a good many more men than women, some people say to me: "My dear, I think you are simply <u>wonderful</u>" – but these are people who don't understand the Civil Service; and also, if they will forgive my saying so, they are people who, in their hearts, still believe women to be inferior to men – inferior, that is, in everything except charm and guile. What I want to explain to you is that it isn't in the least wonderful for a woman to be a Deputy Secretary. And that any of your daughters, if they have got a chance of a University education, a reasonably good <u>head</u> for exams <u>and</u> a wish to succeed in a profession, can do the same.[72]

A significant innovation of Quigley's was the introduction of a weekend edition of the programme, which was initially broadcast as a half-hour *Woman's Hour Digest* on Sunday afternoons from 30 September 1951 and then as the more substantial *Home for the Day*, on Sunday mornings, from 29 March 1953. Since 1948, organisations such as the National Federation of Business and Professional Women's Clubs had been lobbying the BBC about the timing of *Woman's Hour* because its broadcast, at 2pm in the afternoon, made it impossible for working women to listen. A memo from Quigley in July 1951 expressed how 'they [businesswomen] argue that *Woman's Hour* is not restricted to items of purely domestic interest and that even if it were, there is no longer a rigid line of demarcation between women with home interests and women with careers', a duality that the programme was determined to reflect.[73]

From almost the start, the programme had broadcast items that would be of particular interest to those in work or considering a return to work. On 11 November 1946, Lady Davidson had spoken about the Royal Commission on Equal Pay, whose report had just been published. Although cautiously in support of equal pay for teachers and civil servants, it would take many years for the report's findings to be introduced and *Woman's Hour* reported several times on the Equal Pay Campaign.[74] The programme's advice expert, Marian Cutler, also gave talks that were specifically targeted at working women: on government grants and training; on national insurance for married women and for those who worked part-time.[75] Taking an overview of the first eight years of the programme, there is an evident increase in items on part-time work and re-joining the workplace in middle-age, although an item billed in *Radio Times* as 'Afternoon Argument: Wives Working' on 28 February 1952, shows that, as an issue, this was still contentious.[76]A major shift is apparent, however, in September 1955 with the first of a new weekly series 'Women Out at Work'. Broadcast each Thursday for seven weeks, this was a substantial series aimed at those who were thinking of a return to employment. Two of the items were later repeated on *Home for the Day*, enabling working women to listen.

'Woman out at Work' opened on 1 September with a talk by Dudley Perkins on 'Employment Law', which highlighted a range of issues that those contemplating a return to work should consider.[77] Three guests were interviewed on 8 September, in an item that addressed problems that women might encounter in industry. Elizabeth Pepperell, Assistant Director of the Industrial Welfare Society, spoke about the hurdles women faced to get promotion, including lack of self-worth and employer attitudes; Mrs Lilian Briscoe, a supervisor working in a factory, reflected on the improvements she had witnessed since the end of the war and how a nursery school had enabled her to return to work after taking three years out to raise her daughter; while Freda Grimble, Secretary of the National Society of Children's Nurseries, underlined the vital role of the day nursery, particularly with an estimated one out of every ten children under five having a working mother.[78] On 15 September there were two talks, the first from Paul Leach on married women's income tax,

the second from Judith Hubback on the married professional woman, which will be considered in more detail below. The topic on 22 September was older women finding work with speakers Audrey Hirst, a Welfare Officer in a large organisation; Tom Crowther, who ran a chain of retail shops; Irene Hilton, of the Women's Employment Federation and Margaret Webb, 'a housewife and mother who, because of family circumstances, has had to take a job'. On 29 September, retirement and pensions were discussed, including questions sent in by listeners. 'Some practical suggestions for middle-aged housewives who are thinking of going out to work" was the subject on 6 October, which included a talk from a woman who worked part-time as a lunchtime supervisor at a school, and another about working as a shop assistant.[79] On 13 October, a panel of experts, led by Irene Hilton, answered 'some questions from women out at work and others who would like to be'. [80] The repeated talks on *Home for the Day* were, on 20 November, 'women in industry' with Elizabeth Pepperell and, on 27 November, the Paul Leach and Judith Hubback talks.

Hubback's talk is of particular interest because it spoke directly to the married professional woman. Hubback was a Cambridge graduate who, like most women, had left her job – in her case as a teacher - when she had her first child. Having been a housewife for many years, she then caused a stir in the press with her pamphlet 'Graduate Wives', published in 1954. This presented the preliminary findings of a questionnaire she had initiated which asked more than a thousand women about their post-university lives.[81] It was also the basis for her *Woman's Hour* talk, which opened thus:

> The married professional woman whose lives and problems I've studied are many of them leading double lives. They're housewives, and they're career women. They are, or they were, teachers, nurses, doctors and dentists, advertisers, civil servants, journalists, librarians, almoners, and goodness knows how many other professions they belong to. Most are married and living happily with their husband and children; a few are widows or separated or divorced. Some are still working at their professions, others have abandoned them for good. A large number have given up outside work for a few years, and become whole-time wives and mothers, but they hope and plan to work again when their children can spare them.

Referencing what was then the prevalent ideology of mothering, as espoused by the likes of John Bowlby and Donald Winnicott, Hubback was clear that 'the child-psychologists tell us that we should ourselves look after our young children'.[82] Yet, she was adamant that this should only be a 'temporary sacrifice'. In her talk, Hubback did not shy away from the many issues and problems that women would face when looking to return to work which, she acknowledged, would mostly be part-time. She also understood that for many, a return to their previous profession might not be possible. She ended on a rousing note, however, that despite the difficulties, 'it is well worth making the effort to face them and to overcome them'. Hubback was not alone in researching the shifting nature of married women's work

at this time. Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein's book *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* would be published in 1956, while Hubback's research was published as the more substantial *Wives who Went to College*, in 1957.[83]

The *Woman's Hour* series 'Woman Out at Work' clearly echoed a reality of the mid-1950s that some married women, including middle-class professional women, were either back in the workplace, or were wishing to be so. As Helen McCarthy, Catriona Beaumont, Virginia Nicholson and others have shown, in a great many cases this was not a straightforward return to the job or the status previously held, nor was it universally sanctioned, but it does reflect a considerable change in attitude from the pre-war years. As Myrdal and Klein acknowledged in the introduction to their book, 'a resolute minority' had, in the past, 'thrust out into the world of business and public affairs… willing to turn their backs on home and family'.[84] Those 'pioneering days', however, were now over, they insisted. This transformation from the 'pioneer' is clearly visible in the BBC's programmes for women during the thirty-two years considered here. Although exceptional women were still celebrated and, indeed, continue to be so today, by the mid-1950s the rhetoric of professional women being in the workplace had become increasingly normalised. It was sexual discrimination in employment that would become a far more pertinent issue on future editions of *Woman's Hour*.

---

[1] BBC programme archives are held at the BBC Written Archives Centre at Caversham Park, Reading. BBC copyright content reproduced courtesy of the British Broadcasting Corporation. All rights reserved.

[2] See, for example, Krista Cowman and Louise Jackson, eds., *Women and Work Culture in Britain c.1850-1950* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005); Virginia Nicholson, *Singled Out: How Two Million Women Survived without Men after the First World War* (London: Viking, 2007); Helen Glew, *Gender, Rhetoric and Regulation: Women's Work in the Civil Service and the London County Council, 1900-55* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2015); Sarah Lonsdale, *Rebel Women Between the Wars: Fearless Writers and Adventurers*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 2020; Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives: A History of Working Motherhood* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020).

[3] See Mari Takayanagi, 'Sacred year or broken reed? The Sex Disqualification (Removal) Act 1919' *Women's History Review* 29, no. 4 (2020): 563-82.

[4] Vera Brittain, *Women's Work in Modern England* (London: Noel Douglas, 1928).

[5] Ray Strachey, *Careers and Openings for Women: A Survey of Women's Employment and a Guide for Those Seeking Work* (London: Faber and Faber, 1935); Vyrnwy Biscoe, *300 Careers for Women* (London: Lovat Dickson, 1930); Margaret Cole, *The Road to Success: Twenty Essays on the Choice of a Career for Women* (London: Methuen and Co, 1936); Dorothy Hughes, *Careers for Our Daughters* (London: A&C Black, 1936).

[6] Adrian Bingham, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2004), 64-8; Jane Robinson, *Ladies Can't Climb Ladders: The Pioneering Adventures of the First Professional Women* (London: Doubleday, 2020).

[7] See, for example, McCarthy, *Double Lives.*

[8] Alva Myrdal and Viola Klein, *Women's Two Roles: Home and Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1956).

[9] See Kate Murphy, 'New and Important Careers': How Women Excelled at the BBC, 1923–1939, *Media International Australia* 161, no.1 (2016): 18-27.

[10] For more on women's working conditions at the BBC see Kate Murphy, *Behind the Wireless: An Early History of Women at the BBC* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016), 105-14, 141-50

[11] Kate Murphy, 'New and Important Careers', 18-27.

[12] See for example Jennifer Purcell, *Mother of the BBC: Mabel Constanduros and the Development of Popular Entertainment on the BBC, 1925-57* (London: Bloomsbury, 2020); Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 221-50.
[13] In the early days of the BBC, programmes were produced locally, and there were differing versions of 'Women's Hour' in other parts of the UK. This article draws on the London programme, which was made at Head Office. See Kate Murphy 'Brightening their Leisure Hours'? The Experiment of BBC Women's Hour, 1923–1925, *Women's History Review* 29, no. 2, (2020): 183-96.
[14] See Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 189-219; Laurel Forster, *Magazine Movements: Women's Culture, Feminisms and Media Form* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 178-205.
[15] For more on women listeners see Maggie Andrews, *Domesticating the Airwaves: Broadcasting, Domesticity and Femininity* (London: Continuum, 2012), 4-29.
[16] Forster, *Magazine Movements*, 177.
[17] The BBC was reorganised into three national in 1946: the Light Service, the Home Programme and the Third Service.
[18] Most recently: Catherine Clay, Maria DiCenzo, Barbara Green, and Fiona Hackney, eds., *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain, 1918-1939*: The Interwar Period (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018).
[19] See Murphy, 'Brightening their Leisure Hours', 186-87.
[20] Ibid.
[21] Adrian Bingham, 'Modern Housecraft? Women's Pages in the National Daily Press' in Clay et al, eds. *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain,* 223.
[22] Alice Wood, 'Housekeeping, Citizenship, and Nationhood in Good Housekeeping and Modern Home' in Clay et al, eds. *Women's Periodicals and Print Culture in Britain,* 215, 216.
[23] Archive documents about BBC programme are rare prior to the mid-1920s, and sporadic into the 1930s.
[24] A digitised version of *Radio Times* is available at https://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/. BBC Programme Records are a register of what was actually broadcast, rather than what was intended to be broadcast.
[25] Marelene Rayner-Canham and Geoff Rayner-Canham, *Chemistry Was Their Life: Pioneering British Women Chemists, 1880-1949* (London: Imperial College Press, 2008), 12.
[26] Emily L B Forster, *Analytical Chemistry as a Profession for Women*, (London: Charles Griffin and Company, 1920), front cover.
[27] *Radio Times*, 21 December 1923, 491.
[28] *Radio Times*, 19 October 1923, 134.
[29] Sarah Lonsdale, *Rebel Women between the Wars,* 26-33.
[30] *Radio Times*, 19 October 1923, 134.
[31] Murphy, Behind the Wireless, 227-30,
[32] The WAC was one of a number of advisory committees established by the early BBC whereby it utilised the advice of dignitaries and experts to give more gravitas to its output. See Murphy, 'Brightening their leisure hours'?', 188-92.
[33] BBC WAC: R16/219, Minutes of Women's Advisory Committee meeting, 30 April 1924. For more on the abandonment of the *Women's Hour* name see Murphy, 'Brightening their leisure hours'?', 190; Forster, *Magazine Movements*, 181.
[34] For more on Hilda Matheson at the BBC, see Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 168-75.
[35] Ibid., 115-23.
[36] Matheson wrote an influential book about broadcasting and its educative purpose. Hilda Matheson, *Broadcasting* (London: Thornton Butterworth, 1933).
[37] For more on Elise Sprott, see Kate Murphy, 'From Women's Hour to Other Women's Lives: BBC Talks for Women and the Women who Made Them, 1923-1939' in Maggie Andrews and Sally McNamara, eds., *Women and the Media: Feminism and Femininity in Britain, 1900 to the Present* (London: Routledge, 2014), 35-38; Murphy, *Behind the Wireless*, 200-7. Virginia Nicholson and Jane Robinson have also written about the non-university educated pioneer.
[38] See for example, Bingham, 'Modern Housecraft?', 231; Wood, 'Housekeeping, Citizenship, and Nationhood' 219.
[39] *Radio Times*, listing: 14 March 1929.
[40] *Radio Times*, listing: 25 April 1929.
[41] For more on Wace and Quigley see Murphy, 'From Women's Hour to Other Women's Lives, 38-43; Murphy, Behind the Wireless, 207-17.
[42] Ibid., 245-50. Olga Collett would go on to become the BBC's first female commentator.
[43] For example, the series 'The Domestic Servant Problem' was broadcast in 1924; a series called 'The Future of Domestic Service' was broadcast in 1930 while Janet Quigley produced the series 'Mistress and Maid' in 1938.

[44] BBC WAC: Careers for Girls script. There is no indication who the speaker was.
[45] There is a large literature on women in the Second World War, see for example Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War* (London: Croom, 1984); Virginia Nicholson, *Millions Like Us: Women's Lives in the Second World War* (London: Viking, 2011).
[46] See for example RK Kelsall, *Higher Civil Servants in Britain* (London: Routledge &Kegan Paul, 1955), 175.
[47] K. Terkanian, 'Women, Work, and the BBC: How Wartime Restrictions and Recruitment Woes Reshaped the Corporation, 1939-45' (PhD diss', University of Bournemouth, 2018), 50-9, 64-70, 103-54. The BBC opened a 24-hour nursery hostel for the children of essential women working at the Monitoring Services, 181-8.
[48] See for example Asa Briggs, *The War of Words, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol. 3* (London: Oxford University Press, 1979).
[49] Sian Nicholas, *The Echo of War: Home Front Propaganda and the Wartime BBC, 1939*-1945 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 73-85.
[50] Ibid., 115. During the writing of this article, the BBC Written Archives Centre was closed to researchers because of the Covid 19 restrictions. This means that this section on the Second World War has been limited to books, articles and what has been accessible online.
[51] Broadcast daily from 25 June 1940-28 September 1945. See Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 71-107
[52] ATS was the Auxiliary Territorial Service, the women's branch of the Army; FANY was the First Aid Nursing Yeomanry.
[53] *Radio Times*, listing: 10 August 1940. VAD was the Voluntary Aid Detachment; WRNS was the Women's Royal Naval Service; WAAF was the Women's Auxiliary Air Force.
[54] According to Sian Nicholas, the content of the initial programmes was seen to be dull, patronising and often embarrassing. There were also complaints from non-service organisations such as the Women's Land Army and the Post Office about being excluded, prompting a relaunch with a wider brief, *The Echo of War*, 117-19; Joy Leman has shown that it was Quigley who pushed for the remit of the programme to be broadened to include all women who had been mobilised for the war effort, so recognising their contribution, '"Pulling our Weight in the Call-up for Women": Class and Gender in British Radio in the Second World War' in Christine Gledhill and Gillian Swanson, eds. *Nationalising Femininity: Culture, Sexuality and British Cinema in the Second World War* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 114.
[55] Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 123.
[56] BBC WAC: R51/644, Hayward to Holmes, 11 September 1942, cited in Nicholas, *Echo of War*, 123.
[57] Ray Strachey had died in 1940.
[58] Cited in Nicholas, *The Echo of War*, 123.
[59] BBC WAC holds a large archive on *Woman's Hour* including programme scripts and internal documents.
[60] For post-war women see, for example, Helen McCarthy, *Double Lives*; Catriona Beaumont, *Housewives and Citizens: Domesticity and the Women's Movement in England*, 1928–64 (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013).
[61] *Radio Times*, listing: 9 October 1945.
[62] Kristin Skoog, 'Neither worker nor housewife but citizen: BBC's Woman's Hour 1946–1955', *Women's History Review* 26, no.6 (2017): 953-74; Justine Lloyd, *Gender and Media in the Broadcast Age: Women's Radio Programming at the BBC, CBC, and ABC* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic and Professional, 2020), 98-136. See also Jenni Murray, *The Woman's Hour: 50 Years of Women in Britain* (London: BBC Books, 1996), 69-78.
[63] BBC WAC: R73/219/1, Collins to Director of Talks, 18 December 1946.
[64] *Woman's Hour* programme script, 2 June 1947. Emphasis in original.
[65] See McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 197-200.
[66] *Woman's Hour* programme script, 6 June 1947.Emphasis in original.
[67] *Woman's Hour* programme script, 26 August 1947.
[68] *Woman's Hour* programme script, 19 November 1947.
[69] 5 June, 11 June, 19 June, 26 June, 24 September, 1 October 1951
[70] *Woman's Hour* programme script, 4 August 1948. De Vitre's talk is included in Jenni Murray, *From Joyce Grenfell to Sharon Osbourne: Woman's Hour, Celebrating Sixty Years of Women's Lives* (London: John Murray, 2006), 30-2
[71] Constance Spry's talk is included in Jenni Murray, *From Joyce Grenfell to Sharon Osbourne,* 67-8.
[72] *Woman's Hour* programme script, 28 November 1951, emphasis in original.
[73] BBC WAC: R51/640/10, Quigley to Controller of Light Programme, 2 July 1951.
[74] 13 June 1947, April 1948, 13 May 1952. Thelma Cazalet Keir's talk on Equal Pay (29 March 1951) is included in Jenni Murray, *From Joyce Grenfell to Sharon Osbourne*, 64-6.

[75] 31 October 1946, 22 November 1949, 24 January 1950. Listener Rosalind Keyte's talk 'On Taking a Part-Time Job' (23 January 1952) is included in ibid. 69-71.
[76] For example, 23 Jan 1952, 21 November 1952, 27 April 1953, 4 May 1953, 23 May 1954.
[77] Perkins was well-known on the BBC for his legal advice talks, particularly the long-running series, 'Can I Help You?'.
[78] Woman's Hour script, 8 September 1955.
[79] Woman's Hour script, 6 October 1955
[80] *Radio Times*, listing: 13 October 1955
[81] See McCarthy, *Double Lives*, 261-5.
[82] Ibid., 147. Donald Winnicott's anonymous talks 'The Ordinary Devoted Mother and her Baby' were broadcast on *Woman's Hour* in early 1952.
[83] Judith Hubback, *Wives who Went to College* (London: Heinemann, 1957).
[84] Myrdal and Klein, *Women's Two Roles,* xvi.