

WOMEN

by Mary Clayton

"Gentlemen - The Ladies" has always been one of the toasts at dinners, but back in history women were far from being treated as 'Ladies' even in their own homes. With the coming of the great religions - Islam and Christianity - women were pushed into the background and over the centuries remained that way until after two world wars.

It was not until 1882 when the Married Woman's Property Act became law that a married woman had control of her own money even if she was a great heiress. Whatever fortune she had in her own right automatically became her husband's property just as she was. Her husband could have mistresses and do what he pleased - spend all her money on gambling, drinking and other women but let her put one foot wrong and she lost everything her home, fortune and children. He could just divorce her and keep everything. After the introduction of the Act her property only meant what she had in her own right - probably through inheritance - any money saved from housekeeping or a dress allowance still belonged to her husband.

Although writing was considered a ladylike occupation amongst those who had the education even so some women wrote and published under a masculine alias such as George Elliot whose real name was Mary Ann Evans. Jane Austin's novels give a clear picture of behaviour in her times albeit mostly about the 'upper class'. Early writers include the Bronte sisters - Emily Jane who wrote Wuthering Heights and Charlotte who wrote Jane Eyre and Anne who wrote The Tenant of Wildfell Hall. All three wrote under male pseudonyms as well - Anne was Acton Bell, Charlotte-Currer Bell and Emily - Ellis Bell - which hid their femininity.

I think we can see why the suffragettes came into being and despite suffering cruelly at the hands of the men in power they went on fighting. Then with the first World War they called a truce and went to work as nurses - V.A.D.s - munition workers - doing mens' work in almost every field. In Great Britain this led to married women getting the vote in 1918 and every woman over the age of 21 in 1930. No doubt the bravery of the women on the battlefields and the publicity attending the death of Edith Cavell helped to change mens' minds. It is worth noting that the State of Wyoming gave women the vote in 1869 and New Zealand in 1898 no doubt because of the pioneer women who worked and suffered alongside their husbands. However here in Great Britain even after women got the vote once married you were relegated to the home and motherhood, though among the so called working class many women not only did all the housework, cooking and looking after children but they also worked to help the family income, some doing menial and hard jobs. Many men still thought they had the right to spend the family money on drinking and gambling. My father, who was a brewer, always told the story how on a Friday evening the women would line up outside the brewery gates to take the housekeeping money from their husbands before they could get to the pub.

There were women who had made their mark against all the odds in the 19th and 20th century - Marie Curie who together with her husband Pierre discovered radium and was given the Nobel Prize with her husband in 1903. In that same year she presented her doctoral thesis - the first advanced research degree to be awarded to a woman - in France. Elizabeth Garret Anderson was Britain's first woman doctor who started a hospital for women in London. Queen Elizabeth of the Belgians qualified as a doctor early in the 20th century. Elizabeth Blackwell was the first woman to qualify as a doctor in 1848 in the United States.

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Florence Nightingale, famed for her work in organising nursing in the Crimean War was responsible for the design of St. Thomas's Hospital in London and was always consulted on hospital design thereafter for the rest of her life. Her nursing training was the basis for that training world wide.

In aviation women were there alongside men going up in balloons at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. In 1910 Mme. Baronne de Laroche and Blanche Stuart Scott qualified as pilots. In the 1920s and 30s women in the air began to set records. Mrs. Victor Bruce (her name was Mildred) and Joan Page were pioneers flying in the 1920s. Most of us know of Amelia Earhart, Jean Batten and England's own Amy Johnson. As a child I remember hearing

much about Amy Johnson and the song written about her 'Amy Wonderful Amy'. Sadly both she and Amelia Earhart lost their lives flying the planes they loved. Amy disappeared over the Thames flying during the Second World War.

Women in politics have come to the fore during the 20th century. Countess Markievicz the Irish Revolutionary who was actually the first woman elected to the English Parliament though she refused to take her seat and became a Cabinet Minister in the Irish Parliament. Since then we have had Golda Meir - Prime Minister of Israel in 1969 she resigned in 1974. Indira Ghandi first woman Prime Minister of India - Dr. Hilda Bynoe first woman Governor of Grenada and of course though she has

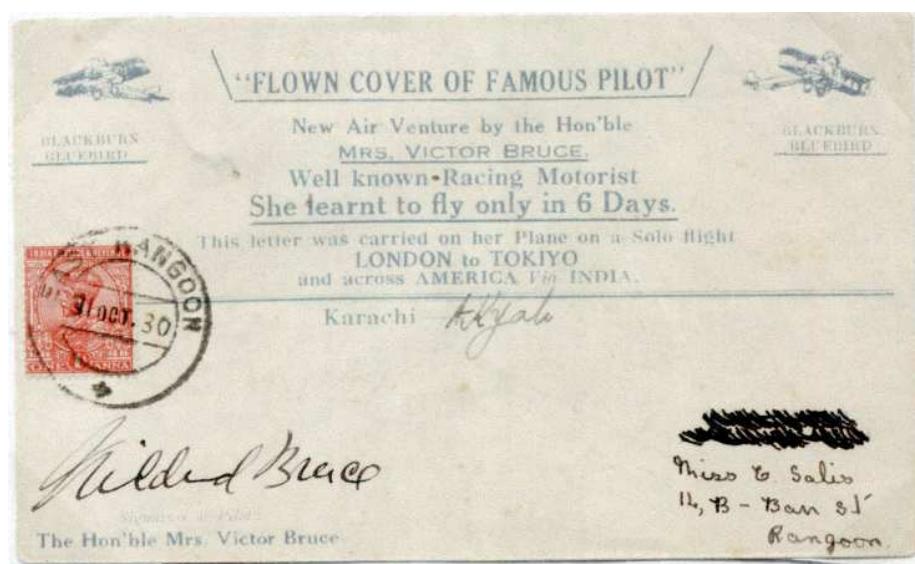
not appeared on a stamp our own Margaret Thatcher. The list of women who have held high office in their countries is long and I will not bore you with them all.

Although actresses were at one time considered to be ladies of easy virtue none the less many made their name and money through the arts either in the theatre or musical comedy - ballet and opera. Some became the mistresses of

Kings and men in high places. Sarah Bernhardt and Lily Langtry both had affairs with Edward VII and many of the glamorous Gaiety Girls married into titled and monied families.

Even in 1947 after women had fought alongside men in all the forces and many were parachuted into France to aid the resistance, others worked in the factories in dangerous jobs, they still had to leave their jobs when they married. Can you imagine the outcry if a man had been told he had to leave when he married. There was still the feeling that women were kept by their husbands and therefore servants to their husbands. In 1955 women in the Civil Service, Local Government and Teaching were granted equal pay, the rest had to wait for the 1980's for equal pay to become law. Reading about all this gave me the idea of starting a thematic collection showing how the lives of women have changed.

Modern woman now has the entree to any career - we have women in every sphere - police - the armed forces - going to sea in the navy - flying bombers and fighters - going all over the world with the army as equal members alongside the men. They are politicians, lawyers, scientists and women have top jobs in the business world. We women owe all this to the women who fought for equal rights all those years ago and we should take our legacy seriously and make sure we vote in elections and fight for what we believe in, but we still have the place we had originally as well - homemakers and mothers. It's a hard world for many modern women who have to be able to juggle their frenetically busy lives. I have heard it said that a woman can do five things at once whilst a man can only handle one thing at a time!!! What have I laid myself open to? - **never mind gentlemen we love you as you are.** - (*The title says it all for me, although I think there's something in the body language - we could be drifting apart? - Ed.*)



"ROSES, ROSES ALL THE WAY."

By Heidi Tollenaar

Last April Henk and I were staying with Mary and Norman Claydon, our British friends who live in Bampton in the county of Devon. We had a very enjoyable time and as always our friends spoiled us very much.

The Saturday of our visit was the date of the annual "Thematic Day" of the West of England Thematic Society (WETS), so we accompanied our friends to the Dartmoor Lodge Hotel Ashburton, where the meeting took place.

During WETS-meetings, which take place three times a year, traders are not present, these days are meant to be get togethers where members discuss and display thematics.

WETS was started some ten years ago by a small group of philatelists, who collect thematically. Now the society has 40 members, of which 37 were present on the day. The members come from societies in Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset.

Members arrived from 10.00 a.m. and were welcomed with a cup of coffee. The day was opened by the chairman Mary Claydon. After her welcome and some society business, Mary called upon the day's speaker, Mrs. Sheila Foster, to speak on her theme: "ROSES, ROSES ALL THE WAY." Sheila's collection, has a wide variety of philatelic material in it. Sheila won a large vermeil at Belgica 2001 and at Hafnia 2001 she won gold.



Prior to lunch Sheila split her display into two parts, each of 80 sheets. The first part of Sheila's collection deals with the cultivation and development of the rose. She introduced the flower and tells about the ancestry and development of new species, and how the rose in the future may look. The second part shows the function the rose has played throughout the ages in man's culture. Starting in the classical world, through Medieval up to and beyond the "Renaissance-Rose", up to the present day where the rose still plays an important role in daily life.

After each part of the presentation the audience were invited to view the sheets. This lead to an animated discussion and a queue in front of the frames. During these periods Sheila responded to a number of questions.

The lunch was taken in the hotel and WETS-members used this for conversation and for making plans for the next thematic day. Mrs. Foster

was invited to come again for a workshop in 2003. After the lunch-break Sheila displayed a number of sheets from her other collections, "From Vine to Wine" and "Proverbs".

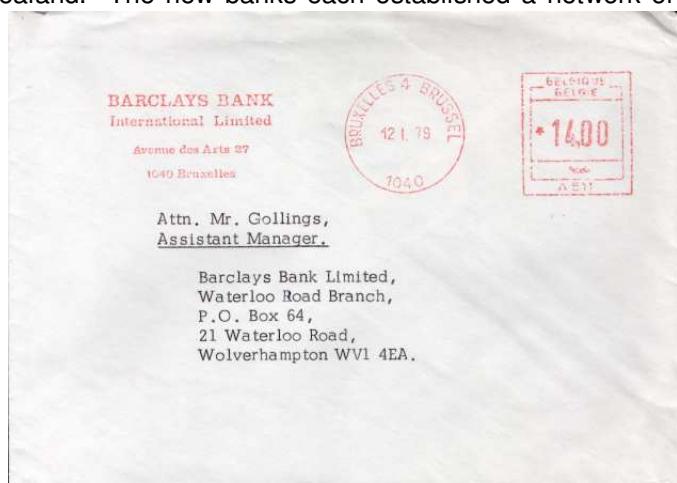
We thoroughly enjoyed this thematic day, which ended at about three o'clock. We met a number of WETS-members, two of them hope to be present at "Eurothema" in November. Also Mary and Norman Claydon want to come and visit us at "The manisfestatie".



THE HIGH STREET BANKS - The late 19th and 20th centuries

(We conclude the series of articles by Lelsie Marley on the History of Banking)

The period that followed was one of growth and consolidation. The total of joint stock banks rose to over a hundred, including all the forerunners of the present six clearing banks and the first of the British overseas banks, operating in Canada, Australia and New Zealand. The new banks each established a network of branches, but in the late Victorian period a large number of amalgamations took place, with the more successful of the new banks absorbing both the old private banks and many of the other joint stock banks. In 1884 there were still 207 private banks, with 443 branches (there had been 336 ~ banks forty years before), and 113 joint stock banks with 1,621 branches. By 1904 the numbers were 40 private banks (with 196 branches) and 65 joint stock banks (with 4,414 branches). The process of amalgamation was hastened by the difficulties which had been met



by many banks during the depressed economic conditions of the 1880s and by the desire of provincial banks like Lloyds and the Midland to expand into southern England and to establish themselves in the City of London and obtain a seat in the Clearing House. But despite the difficulties experienced by many of the smaller banks, the end of the nineteenth century was a great period for British finance. The City of London was established as the centre of international trade, and the fortunes of the great merchant banks, which are today the only real survivors of the old private banks, were made at this time.

The amalgamations within the banking system continued up to, during and after the Great War. The spate of amalgamations which began in 1918 eventually led to the emergence of the "Big Five" - National Provincial and Westminster.

a Treasury Committee was established to study their possible implications and although their findings were never given the force of law, they nevertheless led to the belief that further large scale banking amalgamations would be strongly opposed by the Bank of England and the Treasury.

The Mergers of the late 1960s - It was not until May 1967 that the official policy on such mergers was clarified by the comments of the National Board for Prices and Incomes in their report on bank charges: "The Bank of England and the Treasury have made it plain to us that they would not obstruct some further amalgamations if the banks were willing to contemplate such a development". With this major uncertainty about official policy removed, the clearing banks were able to consider new groupings and on 26 January 1968 the merger between National Provincial and Westminster Banks was announced. The business of the two banks were complementary - Westminster having a branch system with marked regional strength in London and the Home Counties and National Provincial having a wide representation in the provinces with the largest gap in the North-West being filled by the purchase of District Bank in 1962. District Bank continued as a separate entity after this acquisition but its business, together with that of National Provincial and Westminster, has now been merged to form the National Westminster Bank which has been trading since 1 January, 1970. The announcement of this new major banking group was allowed on 8 February 1968 by news of a proposed triple merger between Barclays, Lloyds and Martin Banks. After reference to the Monopolies Commission, however, the Government opposed this merger on the grounds that it was likely to operate against the public interest. It was agreed that there was a strong case for Martins joining with another bank, which in the end was Barclays and the two banks have been trading under the sole name of Barclays since December 1969. In the midst of these clearing bank mergers, two large Scottish Banks, The Royal Bank of Scotland and the National Commercial Bank of Scotland, announced their intention to merge. Between them these banks owned three smaller clearing banks, Glyn Mills & Co., Williams Deacon's Bank and the National Bank and it was a logical conclusion of the Scottish merger that the business or their English subsidiaries should also be combined. Since 25 September 1970 therefore, these

three banks have been trading under the name of Williams & Glyn's Bank. The clearing banks thus now comprise - Barclays, Lloyds, Midland, National Westminster - the "Big Four" - Williams and Glyn's, Coutts & Co (a small wholly-owned subsidiary of National Westminster), the Co-Operative Bank and the Trustee Savings Bank.



Barclays, Lloyds, Midland,
At the time of these mergers

OUR NEXT MEETING
Saturday 16th November 2002
Buckfastleigh Town Hall
Start 2.00 p.m.