WOMEN REFLECTING ON WOMEN: ARE WE THERE YET?

Supplementary Text

A heritage partnership project between
Skippko and 13 communities in Leeds

Women Reflecting on Women: Are We There Yet?
A heritage partnership project between Skippko and 13 communities in Leeds
funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund

ISBN 978-1-9164416-2-0

Published by Skippko
42 Barkston House, Croydon Street, Leeds LS11 9RT
Telephone: 0113 234 5355
www.skippko.org.uk
@skippko

Edited by Arthur Stafford and Cath Brooke
Artwork created by Skippko artists and project participants
Design and layout by Donna Heath (donzfreelance@gmail.com)
Photography by Nicki Taylor
We are grateful to Leeds Libraries and Information Service and Leodis Photographic Archive for permission to reproduce images throughout this publication. All other images are from participants personal collections or reproduced under permitted use for community research.
Sequel font by Shaped Fonts
Printed and bound in Bradford, UK by Kolorco (kolorco.com)

Project Partners:
Leeds Libraries and Information Service
Leeds Museums and Galleries
University of Leeds
Skippko

Project Funders:
National Lottery Heritage Fund

Additional support:
Leeds Libraries and Information Service
Leeds Museums and Galleries

Thanks:
With thanks to all of those participating in the project from the communities of Leeds without whom this work would not have been possible. Special thanks are given to members of the core groups who maintained their commitment and energy for the duration of the project.

Special thanks go to Sally, Antony, Josh and the team in Leeds Central Library: Local & Family History who provided an incredible amount of support across the entire programme.

Skippko is a company limited by guarantee (3330301) and registered for charitable purposes (1068364).

Skippko is supported by Leeds City Council and is part of the arts@leeds funded portfolio 2018-2021.

Introduction

There were a number of project outcomes we confidently anticipated for this project when submitting funding applications to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. However, there were two we absolutely didn't: the first was the coronavirus outbreak and the second was the extraordinary amount of written material participants would present to us as the project developed. As one of those attending a workshop exclaimed "I've not done as much writing as this since I was at school!"

As we started pulling together the materials for the various chapters in the publication it quickly became apparent there was no possibility of doing justice to the amount of written work within the publication. So, we decided to create a Supplementary Publication, a simpler layout and design intended to capture all of the additional written work generated by participants.

The starting point for this work was, as throughout the project, what can we find out about the lives of working class women at the end of the 19th/ early 20th Centuries and how do we respond to that knowledge?

In the following pages, we see the verbatim text generated by a number of those attending the workshops and those who were part of the research group. As with the main publication, tells participants' stories of families, former generations and personal stories, in their words. These stories are important as they are from people largely ignored by history and, they celebrate family and local history frequently absent from the collective (and recorded) history of this City.

It is an enormous privilege to introduce this supplementary edition and to, once again, pay testament to the creativity, resilience and sheer determination of people from communities across the City of Leeds.

Arthur Stafford
April 2021

SKIPPKO
change through creativity

Mary Gawthorpe and Alice Scatcherd
Caring Together additional text

Mary Eleanor Gawthorpe 12th Jan 1881. Died 12th March 1973. Suffragette socialist, trade unionist and editor. She was described by Rebecca West as a “merry militant saint”.

Father John Gawthorpe leather worker, Annie Eliza (Mountain) Gawthorpe mother Mary had 4 siblings a baby and eldest sister died within a year of each other Mary became a socialist active in National Union of Teachers.

She joined Independent Labour Party and in 1906 she left teaching to become a full time paid organiser the WSPU (Women’s Social and Political Union).

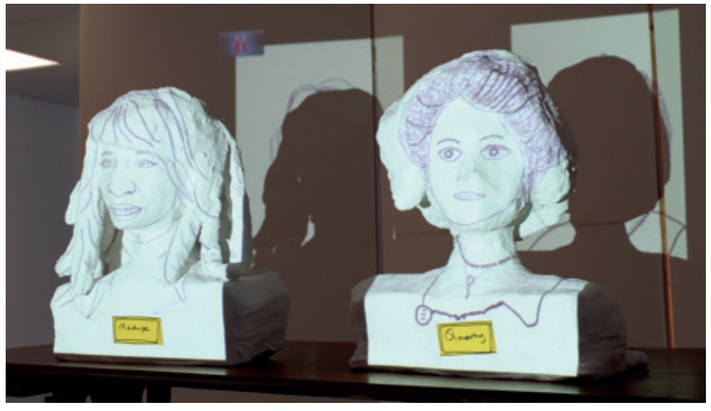
Gawthorpe also spoke at national events including a rally in Hyde Park in 1908 attended by 200,000 people as well as being imprisoned on several occasions for her political activities, she was also badly beaten suffering serious internal injuries after heckling Winston Churchill in 1909.

Gawthorpe emigrated to New York in 1916. She was active in the American suffrage movement and later in trade union movement becoming an official of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of American Union. She wrote a book of her early efforts in her auto biography “Up Hill To Holloway” (1962)

She won a scholarship to a secondary school but couldn’t afford the fees instead she became a pupil teacher instructing younger children during the day before receiving her own lessons in the evening. She moved to Hunslet taking her mother and younger brother to leave her abusive father.

Alice Cliff Scatcherd 1842-1906 was born into wealth. She was born in Wortley but lived much of her life in Morley West Yorkshire including Morley Hall. Scatcherd donated Scatcherd Park to the town. Alice scrapbooks on microfilm (MIC YB SCA) comprise letters photos and letter press relating to the national suffrage campaign are in Morley Library.

She was married to Oliver S. a textile factory owner and Mayor of Morley. Scatcherd was critical of the existing nature of marriage and refused to attend wedding services in established churches where women took a vow of obedience to men. She shocked late 19th century conservative society by travelling Europe with her husband without a wedding ring. Alice is buried in St Mary’s in the Wood churchyard Morley.



Mary Gawthorpe

We’re all part of history
Pat (Caring Together)

Twenty years ago Susan Egan who then had Lisa’s capacity building job, persuaded me to join Caring Together. We had only come to live in Leeds in 1999. Next she urged me to start a choir and then she persuaded the choir to try singing a famous Amy Winehouse song; ‘He tried to make me go to rehab, I said No, No, No’ very funny. ‘Old Macdonald had a farm’ was more our style. The choir met in a freezing cold church, which is long gone, as are more than half of the singers: a bit of Caring Together history which still brings smiles to the lips of the survivors.

I was a ‘younger oldie’ in 2000, still half full of beans. But now as an ‘older oldie’ just walking to the bus is sometimes too much effort so it was great to hear this Spring that as part of Leeds Inspired, Skippko had asked volunteers from Caring Together to join in a series of fifteen meetings to create a picture of the lives of some inspirational Woodhouse women over the last century. Meetings, with transport included were set up in various places. The aim was to create an eye catching exhibition to be shown in the city museum in spring 2020. Skippko organised some gifted professionals to work with us: a film maker (Rozi Fuller), a sculptor (Van Nong), a librarian (Sally Hughes) and a Kirkstall Museum curator (Nicola Pullen). We’ve played with expensive video cameras, had a go at modelling with plaster of Paris. We’ve laughed at our own portraits winking and blinking on film, built up a large scrapbook recording our activities to remind ourselves – we are all part of history.

In the city archives we spent hours pouring over maps of Woodhouse a century ago and browsing books of newspaper cuttings, laughing at adverts of corsets and soap powder and appreciated the effect of a big suffragette meeting in Hyde Park in 1908. Lisa discovered that her great great grandparents fled from Russia after the assassination of the last Czar and settled in the then poverty stricken area known as the Leylands off North Street. Felina and Vivienne were involved with this project at the same time as a similar exhibition called ‘Eulogy’ about Leeds first generation of Jamaicans.

Choosing to focus on Doreen Tinker’s life was an easy option. For decades she was known as ‘Mrs Woodhouse’. Doreen’s kitchen was a hive of community activity; her husband Ken checked on the welfare of vulnerable folk when he delivered their milk.

I can’t tell you how much I’ve enjoyed this project and I hope Caring Together puts on coach trips for everyone to see what we’ve been up to.

Pat Tempest

Doreen Tinker MBE an inspirational woman

Pat (Caring Together)

Visitors to Woodhouse Community Centre often ask: 'Why is there a Doreen Tinker Room here?'

Doreen was a dynamic Woodhouse community activist for the second half of the 20th century. She was briefly famous for refusing to go to Buckingham Palace to collect the MBE she had been awarded. Instead, she insisted the Lord Lieutenant John Lyles came to Leeds to hand over the medal in the Town Hall, in the presence of her friends and family. Since Woodhouse Community Centre was renovated in 2012, her spirit lives on in her room which is available for rent by all voluntary local groups.

She wasn't the first inspirational woman in her family. In 1914, when the whole country was preparing for war, the Lady Mayoress of Leeds suggested that women could best contribute to the war effort by knitting blanket squares for soldiers at the front line.

But five years before that, at a big rally in Hyde Park, Mary Gawthorpe had suggested that women could - and should - do more than that. So Doreen's mother, May, then aged 19, volunteered as a Red Cross nurse on the battle front in France. And when she came back she married her most seriously wounded patient – George Arthur Collinson. They lived in one of the cottages adjoining the Chemic pub, and kept open house for any hard-up returned soldier customers at the pub who had nowhere to go.

Doreen was born into this sociable household in 1931. She left school aged 14 to work as a tailor in a mill on Cross Chancellor Street making men's trousers. The community benefitted hugely when she married Ken Tinker in 1951. His father ran Servia Road Dairy, and Doreen looked after the shop while Ken was on his milk rounds. He knew every lonely old woman, every wild child, every broken street light, every under-nourished kid in the district. Very soon Doreen's kitchen, like her mother's, was a centre for local action and involvement in re-housing schemes and health care. For those people who were living for the first time in houses with gardens, the practical Tinkers set up a garden tool loan scheme from which, eventually, a Tenants' Association was born.

Doreen and her dynamic sister Betty had kids at about the same time, and once they were at Woodhouse Primary School, they set up a PTA, and took action later on when the growing kids brought their teenage friends crowding into Doreen's kitchen, complaining that, unlike their parents who had the Liberal Club on Woodhouse Street to meet their friends, they had nowhere to go outside school hours. Initially, Council rules only allowed clubs for age 13+ kids. Gradually, they got the rules relaxed and extended to allow clubs for 9-13 year olds and eventually 5-8 year olds.

The clubs were run by volunteers in a variety of church and school halls. Then Doreen got hold of a grant to set up a very original scheme called 'Meals on Feet' where young disabled kids took meals (helped by Ken's van if the weather was bad) to older people isolated in their homes. The Tinkers owned a caravan in Primrose Valley which they let to anyone who needed a break for a peppercorn rent.

The brilliant problem solving Tinkers were a Social Enterprise Scheme before the phrase was invented.

They took on a grocery shop on Jubilee Road around 1962, and when it was knocked down, they took on a wool shop – which also became a talking shop – at Charing Cross. All this time Doreen worked as the caretaker supervisor at Notre Dame School. Ken continued as the milkman, with his truck a great resource for furniture removals and building supplies carrier – even Christmas dinner delivery.

In 1982 funds arrived to set up an Advice Centre at Charing Cross, and Doreen set her mind to qualifying as a benefits adviser as well as teaching cake and dress making to young women. Eventually the '2 G's' – Grandad and Grandma Club, began to meet on Tuesdays, and The Tenants'Association became the Tenants' Involvement Committee from 1974, meeting monthly, along with local authority councillors and housing directors, to keep track of the complex housing situation. Ken developed a reputation as a versatile handyman and he and his friends built a stage at Quarrymount School as well as setting out a garden at the back of the playground.

It was on January 1st 1999 that Doreen, by then aged 69, was completely amazed by a letter from 10 Downing Street telling her she had been nominated to be awarded an MBE in the New Year's Honours List. This was a reward for twenty five years of voluntary community work. Most people go to London to receive the medal from the Queen at Buckingham Palace. But they can only take three guests. But Doreen felt that she didn't deserve a medal more than Ken and the host of friends and family who made up the Woodhouse Community.

And so it was arranged that on June 3rd the same year, Lord Lieutenant John Lyles came to Leeds and handed her the medal on behalf of the Queen in the Blue Room in the Town Hall. In 2000, Doreen sent apologies to another invitation to a Buckingham Palace garden party because she couldn't justify the expense of special clothes and train fare.

But she was there when the Queen came up to Leeds for a council reception in 2001. By then she was wearing her medal and was Chair of the now Leeds-wide Tenants' Involvement Committee.

The mountain had come to Mohammed.

Medal-honour gran gives up chance of seeing the Queen

'I wanted to stay in my home city'

The women workers of George Bray & Co. Ltd

Ian & Heather (Research Team)

Ian's mother lived in Sheffield during the Second World War and after a bomb during the blitz destroyed the factory where she worked she was directed by Ernest Bevin's Ministry of Labour to work for George Bray & Co in Leeds. She would have been aged about 18 at the time and this would have a great upheaval for her. She had to live in "digs" on Trentham Street and share a room with some other girls about her own age. This would have been the first time she lived away from home and living in a different city and doing a different job would have been very scary for her at first. Every Friday night she would catch a 65 bus from Leeds back home to Sheffield; a journey that often took over 2 hours. Then on Sunday night she would catch the bus back again to be ready for work on Monday morning. Sometimes she didn't get home at the weekend as overtime needed to be worked and whilst the extra money was welcome she missed being able to spend even a short time at home.

When Ian asked about what work she did at Bray's she always said that she tested electrical resistors that were used in radio sets in aircraft, but we suspect that she was involved in the inspection and testing of fuses used in artillery shells, as that was similar to the work she did in Sheffield. We think Ian's mother had been a "female inspector" at Bray's. She would travel from machine to machine and gauge components as produced by the machines at regular intervals; if any defects were discovered production would be stopped until the fault was rectified. The number of fuses and primers produced by Bray's during the Second World War totalled over 13 million. No fuses or primers made by Bray's were ever rejected by the military authorities for not meeting their specifications and we think this is a remarkable feat of engineering production. We expect Ian's mother was told not to ever say what she did when she work at Bray's – "Careless talk costs lives!"

As Ian's mother had worked at Bray's we became interested in finding out more about it and particularly the women who worked there. How did their employer treat them? Did they enjoy their work? Were they treated equally with male employees? These were questions we wanted to answer.

George Bray's company started in 1863 when George Bray invented a better type of gas burner for gas lighting. This is prior to the invention of the gas mantle when lighting was from a gas flame. All gas burners had been made of metal, which quickly corroded due to the action of the gas upon the metal; George Bray invented a porcelain tipped burner, which did not corrode. This made George Bray a very rich man and his factory quickly expanded till he employed about 1500 people, many of them women.

When the gas mantle was invented in Germany this obviously reduced the demand for flat flame burners but by this time George Bray had diversified into producing acetylene burners for headlamps on early cars and burners for other types of gases. His flat flame burners were also used in gas geyser type water heaters that became popular from the early 1900s. Bray's became a pioneering company in developing ceramics for use in engineering. As well as gas burners, they produced ceramic electrical insulators used in switchgear and electrical heating elements used in immersion heaters and kettles. They also manufactured a car engine heater. This device kept your car engine warm when it was parked overnight so it would start more easily on a cold winter's morning!

Lilian Mary Sutton – MSc AMI(Chem)E. (Associate Member of Institution of Chemical Engineers) CBE (Chief Chemist of the Laboratory Department of George Bray & Co. Ltd)

Miss Lilian Mary Sutton joined Bray's as a chemist in their laboratory department around 1926. Previously she had studied at Leeds University and had gained an MSc in Chemical Engineering. She must have been good at her job because after 6 years she was appointed Chief Chemist at Bray's and she remained in this role for at least another 14 years. Her job would have been a very responsible one and it must have been very unusual for a woman to have such a high level position at this time. The laboratory carried out research into the correct mix of clays, talcum, asbestos, and other chemicals to produce ceramics that had the desired characteristics for the product. The characteristics would be mechanical strength, electrical resistance, and how these changed at high temperatures. The lab also sample tested the finished products to make sure they were up to standard. As far as we can tell Lilian Mary Sutton never married and lived for a number of years in an apartment in Woodsley Terrace off Clarendon Road in Leeds. It may be that she never married because that would mean she would have to give up her job. Clarendon Road would have been a posh area at that time. From the notes of Directors' meetings we have found that she was awarded a pay increase of £50 from £450 to £500 per year in 1937. That would be about £34,000 today. While that was a very good wage, it was considerably less than men in senior positions at Bray's were paid. Finding out about Lilian has proven difficult. Despite the fact that she was awarded a CBE in 1946 for "war work" very few records of her seem to exist. It would seem it is far easier to find records about the achievements of men at this period than it is of women. So we may never know just what the "war work" was that she did or why it was so important that King George V honoured her in his birthday honours list in 1946.

Were Bray's good employers? Well, they do seem to have been quite caring towards their staff from what we have read in the directors' meeting minutes and newspaper reports. Many of their employees stayed with the firm for many years. Some long serving employees were given pensions from the company when they retired and some allowed to keep on drawing their weekly wage even after they had retired. One lady who had worked for Brays for 60 years from being 14 years old was given a cheque for £100 by Bray's when she retired in 1943 and a pension. The equivalent today would be £4,500. The company secretary however, who retired a few years earlier, was given a Standard 8 motor car worth about £460 upon his retirement after only 30 years service!

One lady remembers working at Bray's in the 1940s. She was 16 years old and her job was drilling holes in nuts for screws. Her shift was 7:30am till 5pm with one hour for dinner. Her wage was £3 10 shillings or thereabouts per week. On pay day there was a long room with a big queue of people waiting to collect their wage packets. She remembers working at long benches with drilling machines on them. The mechanic who repaired the machines she described as "being a bit of a catch". Girls used to break the drill bit on purpose so they could chat him up when he came to fix the machine!

So we think Bray's were a good company to work for and did try to care for loyal workers. As was usual practice at that time, women were certainly not treated on an equal footing with men. The following is an extract from a speech given by Mr M.T. Nurrish, who was a senior manager at Bray's in 1946, about precision mass production: *"The whole of the work was carried out, including the assembly, by female labour, with the exception of the setting up and maintenance of the machines, which was carried out by skilled male labour"*. In talking about the production of aircraft oxygen regulators, Mr Nurrish goes on to say: *"These regulators were made, and assembled, entirely by unskilled female labour, with the exception of the setting up and maintenance of the machines, which was carried out by skilled male labour"*. At this time women would be paid less than men so it was cheaper for the company to employ them. There were very few opportunities for women to get the training they needed to become skilled workers in any field of engineering. Apprenticeships in engineering were nearly always given to boys right up the 1970s. Ian's mother as a "female inspector" had probably shown some acumen for the work and because of a shortage of male labour during the war had received some training to do this. After the war was over and people were no longer told where they must work, his mother was asked to stay on at Bray's because there was still a shortage of male labour. She was tired of the traveling, living in digs, and she missed her home and family; so she got a job at Moore & Wright's factory in Sheffield where she calibrated and tested for accuracy engineering measuring instruments such as micrometers and Vernier gauges. Similar work to that she had done at Bray's. She stayed at Moore & Wright's until she married in 1954. Moore & Wright's didn't employ married women and the shortage of male labour was not so bad as many men had been demobbed from the forces and wanted jobs.

Bray's continued to have a factory in Leeds until the 1970s when they were taken over by an overseas company and production moved abroad. The use of ceramics in engineering and electronics continues to this day. Did you know there are over 50 ceramic components in your smartphone?

House Work Memories
Additional text (Caring Together Group)

Maureen

My Dad was a coach painter and signwriter. Our home decorating by Dad was determined by what paint he had left. The old iron oven was apple green and the wooden toilet seat was post office red.

Washing was done by hand with the help of a posser and mangle. We didn't have a washing machine until the 1970s and that was a table top one. Filled by a hose attached to the hot tap it was very basic but we felt privileged!

Our first fridge was given to us by friends so second-hand but mum still shopped daily for fresh food as she didn't trust it for storing essentials.

Back in the 1950s and 60s we had no heating upstairs at home. Mum would clean the bedrooms and bathroom wearing her winter coat and headscarf.

Vivienne – as told to Felina

How to make a bed *(from the Caribbean)*

1) We used to get the empty flour bags, wash them and sew them leaving a "placket*" in the middle using a hand Singer sewing machine.
2) We would cut the grass (2 kinds) one long, thin /short, curly. The grass would be put out to dry and turned over frequently. You would sift through and remove hard bits, mix to get a better texture.
3) We would stuff the bed with the grass: 7 bags are required to make a 4'6" bed. Stitch 4 together. Other 3 would be stitched on top. From time to time (approx. 3 or 4 times a year) you would empty the grass and wash the casing and refill with fresh grass.

*Felina explained that she thinks the 'placket' Vivienne mentions is patwa for 'pocket'. Vivienne insisted she meant 'placket' and demonstrated by crafting one with paper. It's a slit within the material on the top of the mattress.

Carrying Water

Roll material into a pad (circle) so you can carry water on your head. Like this… (placing fabric pad on top of her head and then the teacup on top of that.)

Dot

No window cleaner – used to sit outside of windows on the sill to do the upstairs window. My mam used vinegar and paper. My first house – I used a leather and duster. The windows those days were sash windows.

When you had bedroom furniture delivered the delivery men had to take out the sash windows and they put straps around the furniture and pulled it up through the bedroom window.

I used to love helping my mam with the washing. Before we got a gas boiler we had to use the set pot in the cellar to boil the water and carry it up stairs to the kitchen. We put the peggy tub under the mangle before we put the water in. Then I used the posser to move the clothes about and rub them up and down on the rubbing board.

Mam would wind the mangle while I put the clothes through the rollers. When we got an electric mangle we were POSH, but we had to be careful because it was very easy to get your fingers trapped but not easy to get them out.

A man used to come round knocking on windows to get people up for work. He used to use a long pole to knock on the windows. You woke up even if you didn't want to because you heard him knocking on the other windows.

When we had coal fires we had to burn most of our rubbish and then take them into the next street and empty them in to a bin. The Bin being a big brick built shed with a hatch door ¾ of the way up. Then when the bin men came it was a wagon with shutters on the side. They climbed into the bin and shovelled the ashes out into the wagon. We could only put *cold ashes* in the bin at all times. Sometimes other streets bin got on fire because of people putting in hot ashes. A few streets shared the same bin. We used to burn food waste as well until a man who kept pigs put a bin in another local street and we put the waste in there. He emptied the bin every few days. It smelt very bad if he was late.

I used to go to the shop for a lady on my street for her some shopping. When she got an empty milk bottle or jam jar she used to give me them to take back to the shop and let me keep the money.

Maureen

Mum would do all the housework and use the carpet sweeper but the old heavy Hoover vac had to be brought out by Dad once a week and he would clean the carpets. I recall my dad having to empty the cloth bag of the Hoover dust and it would go everywhere and it would need cleaning again.

Alistair

In my early childhood (say, when I was 4 or 5 – in 1961/62) my mother returned to part-time work as a lecturer in secretarial subjects (shorthand and typing) at colleges of further education in Leeds. Much of her teaching work took the form of evening classes; and during the daytime she could – on occasion – treat herself to shopping for hats, shoes, handbags and gloves at the prominent department stores in Leeds: Marshall and Snelgrove; Matthias Robinson, and Bradford; Brown Muff and Co; Bustys', and naturally I would accompany her on these excursions. Some stores sensibly catered for mothers with young children by providing creches, and one of my principal memories from this era is of a little typewritten magazine printed in green ink given to keep patrons' offspring occupied at one of the Leeds department stores (probably Matthias Robinson, but I can't be sure). The magazine featured an adventure story in instalments, along with quiz questions and puzzles etc. Sadly, however, none of these independent retailers could survive the economic trends of the 1960s and 70s. According to the internet, Matthias Robinson disappeared as early as 1962 when it was taken over by Debenhams, and the sector suffered a succession or merger involving names such as Schofields, House of Fraser, Rackhams, mostly ending in closure and demolition of once grand buildings.

Julia Bingham 1881-1953
Maureen (Caring Together)

Julia Bingham was born at 231 Woodhouse Street, Leeds the eldest daughter of a cloth salesman and a performer of humorous songs described by the Leeds Mercury as “well known in Leeds bohemian circles”!

Music played a big part in the Bingham family, all connected to St Augustine’s Church, Wrangthorn where Julia’s father sang in the church choir together with her brother who was also organist for many years.

At some point in Julia’s early years it is thought she contracted an illness which left her profoundly deaf.

Julia’s elder brother Edwin Glover Bingham was an accomplished pianist and composer of classical music who would entertain at many Leeds musical venues both as a solo musician and accompanist to many local singers.

Julia’s two loves were music and ballroom dancing, her favourite song being the ‘Veleta’ for which she won many competitions – even though she was stone deaf! The Valeta was written by Leeds based composer Arthur Morris, which is why we’ve used it as the sound track for our soap opera. Julia felt the rhythm of the music and in addition to her love of dance, she would attend many classical music concerts, chaperoned by her brother Edwin. She would proudly wear evening dress and a long blue velvet and fur coat bought by her brother and felt every beat of the beautiful music even though many of his compositions were unheard to her.

Julia’s mother and father died within a month of each other in 1900, aged 43 and 46 respectively.

Edwin died tragically in 1908 after swallowing a tooth which lodged in his lung setting up gangrene. The society of Professional Musicians held a benefit concert for him at the Theatre Royal, Leeds with all proceeds to pay for his convalescence at Grange Over Sands. However Edwin was too ill to attend the concert and travel to the convalescent home in the Lake District. He died aged just 31.

Julia married in 1910 at Emmanuel Church, Woodhouse Lane now part of University of Leeds, going on to bear two sons and a daughter. Sadly, she had a hard and neglected marriage resulting in her husband leaving home but Julia was a strong woman and her life was enriched by her children. She danced no more and tragically collapsed in the street in 1953 when out walking with her 14 year old granddaughter. No mobile phones to the rescue in those days but there were always people walking in their daily lives and would rush to her aid. Julia Bingham died a short time later in Leeds General Infirmary aged 71.

Pregnancy & Birth
Deborah (Research Team)

I thought it would be interesting to look at this subject after my daughter became pregnant with her first child in 2019. What level of care would she have received 100 years ago?

Women tend not to live in the extended families we had at the beginning of the last century, and no longer live alongside mothers, sisters, cousins, etc who would be pregnant or nursing. Women miss out on a lot of the practical experience of witnessing childbirth, and helping with childcare. However, with the NHS, libraries and the internet, women now have access to a huge amount of information and support groups.

Midwifery wasn’t legally recognised in Britain until the introduction of the first Midwives Act in 1902. Despite this, there continued to be a large proportion of women who were supported by midwives who had not been formally trained. There was a series of Midwives Acts – in 1918, 1926 and 1936, which provided stricter guidance in assuring that only qualified midwives were able to attend births. However, many women continued to seek unqualified midwives as they were less expensive.

In Leeds, the Maternity Hospital was founded in 1905 by the Leeds Ladies Hospital Fund. Originally in Clarendon Road, it then moved to Hyde Terrace in 1910. However, the majority of women gave birth at home, where it was more comfortable, and was much cheaper.

The Leeds Babies Welcome Association was established in 1912 – the object being to organise centres where mothers could go for friendly talks and for trained instructions in the care of their babies and in matters relating to their own health. Antenatal classes that we know today were unheard of 100 years ago, and fathers were not encouraged to take an active role in preparations for the birth, and were definitely not expected to be there for the birth!

The rate of infant mortality in Leeds during 1913 was 136 per 1000, and the number of physical defects among children of school age was 34,476. The Medical Officer of Health and the Secretary of the Education Committee stated in the Association’s Annual Report in 1915 – “The care of infancy is the peculiar duty of women”. However, the cause of infant mortality was not that mothers were ignorant or degenerate, but that they had too little money to provide for their own and their family’s needs. This is a state of affairs we are seeing again in the 21st century. Sadly, the infant mortality rates have risen year-on-year since 2010, and at 4.8 per 1000 in Leeds, are much higher than the average for the UK. The biggest cause has been found to be poverty, as more affluent areas of the country are unaffected.

www.leeds.ac.uk/news/article/4481/unprecedented-rise-in-infant-mortality-linked-to-poverty

“Round About a Pound a Week”; Maud Pember Reeves

Moor Allerton Elderly Care
additional text

Doreen

Alice Scatcherd

(1842–1906) was an early British suffragist who in 1889 founded the Women's Franchise League, with Harriet McIlquham, Ursula Bright, Emmeline Pankhurst, Richard Pankhurst and Elizabeth Clarke Wolstenholme Elmy.

Scatcherd was born in Wortley and was a lifelong campaigner for women's rights who lived much of her life in Morley, West Yorkshire including in Morley Hall. Scatcherd donated Scatcherd Park to the town.

She was secretary for the Leeds branch of the National Society for Women's Suffrage (NSWS).

Scatcherd was active in speaking out at events in the 1870s as typified by an example on 24 March 1877, when she appeared alongside Lydia Becker and other early suffragettes to discuss women's access to the vote in Macclesfield.

Michelle

Came to Leeds from Hull in 1970. Husband came to work. Lived in Alwoodley – the Buckstones – from then until now.

I used to teach English to Asian Ladies in their own homes. Based in the centre of Leeds.

Thinking about a trip she took to Greenham Common to visit the protest in 1984.

From handwritten notes (transcribed as accurately as possible).

30.9.84 8.40pm

Just returned from the trip to Greenham Common. In a bus full of middle-class women, mostly with middle-class accents. My kind of middle-class, hard-working lower professionals, white collar workers, etc. The coach is insulated against outside noise and there's the steady hum of the engine and the constant chatter of voices, gentle, sweet, voices, pleasant talking of personal things or what I do with my children, where we went last year. We have the occasional story, I was arrested. Somebody who has camped at Greenham, one of our bus load, was taken for questioning today and was due to be charged. There was a whip round to help pay her fare home as she had to be left behind.

It's a new feeling of freedom from that house. I'm able to move around the country on my own, without consulting others. Leaving domestic problems behind.

Life on a scattered gypsy encampment really. No wonder women take to it. Free from domestic worries, life takes on new dimensions. All these women are very capable. The woman today who was arrested is from Bradford. She and four others have just taken part in the Ilkley festival putting on an exhibition of their lives.

Not a lot of spirit among our crowd. Few of us joined in the singing started up by another group. We didn't know the songs but the first one was simply repeated.

We are women
We are strong
We will stop the bomb *(sung to the tune of Frere Jaques).*

Riding in a coach is a different experience from riding in a car along the motorway.

I feel less tired in the body than I expected, either they have improved the seat positions since I was last in a coach – when I went to the Lake District in the 60's, I suppose I am fitter. I know I am fitter.

Quiet dark night.

The coach has a good running speed – very smooth – when it goes faster it becomes more bumpy.

Pauline

Leeds Tailoress' Strike (1889)

33 Park Square

Messrs. Arthur & Co Ltd tailoring works were based at 33 Park Square: the scene of the 1889 Tailoress' Strike. The strike began on October 22, when over 600 workers at Arthur & Co. stopped work. The workers were frustrated at a draconian system of fines and deductions, especially the charge of 1 penny in a shilling for the use of power to run the machines. Isabella Ford, the social reformer and suffragist, spoke out on behalf of the tailoresses and public collections were made to ensure the strike continued. The strike lasted six weeks, but the women were eventually forced to return to work.

25th February 1970. Meeting on Woodhouse Moor of striking workers. Five thousand clothing factory workers rejected on the offer of immediate negotiations on their claim if they returned to work. Charlie Taylor was chairman of the unofficial strike committee. St Marks School can be seen in the background.

Clothing Strike (1970)

Westgate and Great George Street

In February 1970, textile workers in Leeds began an unofficial strike in support of their demand for a shilling an hour pay increase. The strike snowballed, with workers attracting further support as they marched from clothing factory to clothing factory – until more than 20,000 people were involved, the majority of them women. The strike originated at the John Collier Ltd. factories in Kirkstall; from there workers marched into Leeds, where they gathered supporters at Headrow Clothes on Westgate and Marlbeck Fashions, near St. George's Crypt, before proceeding further into the city centre. The strike lasted around two weeks.

Are We There Yet?
Alistair (Research Team)

The Performing Arts

As this project demonstrates, Leeds has been the birthplace of many women who have taken vital roles over the last two centuries in the arts and sciences, nursing and health, philanthropy and politics. Considering the field of the performing arts, the most prominent Leeds-born figure in terms of worldwide fame in recent decades is surely Mel B "Scary Spice" of the Spice Girls born Melanie Janine Brown on 29 May 1975, who was formerly a pupil at Intake High School. Our focus here, however, is on another four artists who have achieved international standing on their respective merits: Lilian Adelaide Neilson, Vesta Victoria, Key Mellor and Corinne Bailey Rae.

Lilian Adelaide Neilson (1847-1880)

Born Elizabeth Ann Brown on 3 March 1847 at 35 St Peter's Square (now part of the site of the Leeds Playhouse, where she is commemorated by a blue plaque). Having become an actress at age 15, she drew special acclaim at London theatres in 1870-71 as the tragic heroines Amy Rosbart and Rebecca in adaptions of novels by Sir Walter Scott, and proceeded to gain distinction in Shakespearian roles and further prosperity on the American stage after 1872. In 1880, a horse riding accident in the Bois de Boulogne, probably aggravating an existing health condition, led to her untimely death aged 33.

Vesta Victoria (1873-1951)

Born Victoria Lawrence on 26 November 1873 at 8 Ebenezer Place, Bramley. Although the streets in the locality were obliterated under re-development programmes by 1969 from the photographic record (see the Leodis website) No 8 Ebenezer place appears a singular brick-built detached house of decent size amid brick and older stone back-to-backs and though-terraces. In a family of music-hall artistes, "Baby Victoria" was introduced to the stage in her infancy and at age 9 made her London debut titled "Miss Victoria" in 1883. Vesta Victoria's talents as a solo music hall singer and comedienne were soon recognised throughout society – Walter Sickert's painting "Vesta Victoria at the Old Bedford" (circa 1890) can now be seen in the V&A Museum – and songwriters composed pieces especially for her. Indeed, compositions such as "Daddy Wouldn't Buy Me A Bow-Wow" by Joseph Tarbrar in 1892 and "Waiting at the Church" by Fred W Leigh ad Henry E Pether in 1006 are still widely known today and Vesta Victoria's extensive repertoire of performances proved immense hits over more than three decades touring the music hall circuits of Britain and America, until her retirement after the First World War. Despite typically adopting a Cockney persona in her comic routines, her publicity photographs tend to project images of style and sophistication. Noted in New York as "one of the most highly paid vaudeville stars", she acquired a substantial property portfolio, yet returned to the stage occasionally after the mid 1920's at venues including Leeds City Varieties, the 1932 Royal Variety Performance, and to play cameos in a number of largely-forgotten British Films. For some time she lived on a houseboat near Hampron Court. Dying from breast cancer aged 77, Vesta Victoria was cremated at Golder's Green Crematorium in 1951.

Kay Mellor

Born Kay Daniek on 11 May 1951. Resuming education after becoming a teenage mother she graduated Bretton Hall College in 1983. A scriptwriter on "Coronation Street" during the 1980's her career in writing, as well as acting and directing, progressed markedly since the 1990's by creating a succession of highly-acclaimed and popular television drama series including "Band of Gold" (ITV 1995-98), "Playing the Field" (BBC 1998-2002), "Fat Friends" (ITV 2000-05), "Between the Sheets" (ITV 2003), "A Passionate Woman" (BBC 2010), "In The Club" (BBC 2014-16) and "Girlfriends" (ITV 2018).

Corinne Bailey Rae

Born Corinne Jacqueline Bailey on 26 February 1979. Graduated in English Literature at University of Leeds in 2000. The success of her debut single "Like a Star" (released in November 2005) and her first album "Corinne Bailey Rae" was accompanied by MOBO awards and Grammy nominations during 2006-08, her reputation being further enhanced through the albums "The Sea" (2010) and "The Heart Speaks in Whispers" (2016).

WOMEN REFLECTING ON WOMEN: ARE WE THERE YET?

This project has been funded by National Lottery Heritage Fund with additional support from Leeds Libraries and Leeds Museums & Galleries.

Skippko is part of Leeds City Council's arts portfolio funded via arts@leeds.

AT THE 2010 UK GENERAL ELECTION THERE WERE 9.1 MILLION WOMEN WHO DID NOT USE THEIR VOTE.

arthur.skippko@gmail.com
cath.skippko@gmail.com
0113 2345355
www.skippko.org.uk
@skippko
@skippko

SKIPPKO
change through creativity

ISBN 978-1-9164416-2-0