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An exploration of the 'railway family': 1900 - 1948

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ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the idea of the 'railway family' in the British railway industry between 1900 and 1948. The 'railway family' was borne out of a desire to create an 'imagined community' of railway workers across the wide geographical boundaries of individual railway companies and the local branches of national trade unions. The thesis seeks to understand how railway companies and trade unions managed and extended the idea, particularly through their magazines and newspapers, in order to cultivate loyalty and support amongst their employees or members and their families. Despite being a male-dominated industry, the idea of the 'railway family' opened up avenues of participation for women within the railway industry, most especially through the women's trade union auxiliaries. These auxiliaries were open to the wives and daughters of railway trade unionists and created a space for these individuals to cultivate their own identity as part of the railway industry and as women, wives and mothers through fundraising for trade union causes, supporting the union during labour unrest and campaigning on political issues that affected the 'railway family'. The idea of the 'railway family' was not just a theoretical model but was lived in practice by railwaymen and their families within their local communities. The creation of occupational communities and the ways in which the 'railway family' supported one another without the interference of railway companies and trade unions will be explored through a case study of Gloucester. This thesis is the first occasion that the idea of the 'railway family' has been studied, both in theory and in

practice, in order to understand how railway companies and trade unions interacted with railway workers and their families and how these individuals utilised the idea to create a lasting support network for all those involved with the railway industry.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

GWR	Great Western Railway
LMS	London Midland and Scottish Railway
LNER	London North Eastern Railway
LNWR	London North Western Railway
LSWR	London South Western Railway
GCR	Great Central Railway
MR	Midland Railway
ASRS	Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants
NUR	National Union of Railwaymen
ASLEF	Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen
RCA	Railway Clerks Association
RWG	Railway Women's Guild

Chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

The railway industry was one of the largest employers in Britain during the first half of the twentieth century yet a study of the 'railway family', the community by which railwaymen and their families were bound to the railway industry and to each other, has never been undertaken. The railway industry in 1900 was a complex structure of many separate companies - approximately 214 railway companies existed before 1923, 121 of which were grouped into four large companies after The Railways Act of 1921.¹ The growth of railway companies, their frequent amalgamations and the rise of trade unionism in this period provided a number of avenues for the deployment of the idea of the 'railway family' and the participation of men, women and children within the 'family' structure.

The idea of the 'railway family' has held a number of definitions throughout the period 1900 to 1948 and beyond. It has been used to refer to the generations of fathers, sons and later, daughters who worked for the same company, and even in the same role. Although the idea existed before 1900, it was not until the turn of the century that railway companies and trade unions began to utilise it to foster a sense of loyalty from railwaymen towards either the company or the union. This coincided with the growth and greater strength of trade unions and the proliferation of railway industry literature which was used to disseminate the idea.

¹ Acworth, W.M, 'Groupings under the Railways Act, 1921', *The Economic Journal*, 33, 129 (1923) pp.20-21

The 'railway family' was not just a theoretical idea and was understood and lived in practice by railwaymen and their family members within occupational communities in towns and cities across Britain.² This study will examine the various ways that the 'railway family' was understood by railway companies, trade unions, railwaymen and their extended family members. By utilising the idea of the 'railway family' as a scholarly historical tool, this thesis seeks to examine the ways that the idea was used by railway companies and trade unions to encourage the development of a loyal community of railway workers and their non-working family members, and as a practical support structure for railwaymen and their wives and children.

But why study the 'railway family'? As one of the largest employers in Britain in the twentieth century, the railway industry has had a significant impact on the history of the UK socially, culturally and economically. Yet social histories of the railway industry are few and far between – the focus has predominantly been on railway companies as businesses and the struggles of railway trade unions in their formation and growth. The idea of the 'railway family' allows us to consider the railway industry from a different perspective, in particular the ways that trade unions and railway companies interacted with working-class railwaymen, their families and communities including non-typical railway users such as women and children. Furthermore, it allows us to examine how these individuals were able to harness the idea for their own benefit and for that of their wider occupational community.

² Within this thesis, 'railway family' in inverted commas refers to the wider community of railway workers, their family members and others within the occupational community. Without the inverted commas, it will concern the generations of family members who worked in the railway industry.

David Howell has argued that it is possible to talk of railway families from the 1920s onwards, whereby employment in the railway industry facilitated the involvement of men, women and children in numerous social and educational activities organised by railway companies and trade unions.³ This thesis will explore Howell's understanding of the idea of the 'railway family'; however, the evidence suggests that the idea of the 'railway family' was in existence much earlier than Howell indicates. This thesis will examine how this community was developed, maintained and extended from 1900 to 1948, during a period when railway companies, trade unions and railway families faced significant social, economic and political challenges.

During this period the emergence of stronger, more militant trade unions and the introduction of women into a predominantly male workforce changed the nature of the railway industry. Such changes and the effect of two World Wars forced railway companies and trade unions to adapt and led to the further development of the idea of a 'railway family' to include the wives and children of railwaymen. In this way, railway companies and trade unions defined the 'railway family' for their own purposes and then used the idea accordingly.

It was crucial for railway companies to employ workers who had the interests of the company at heart in order to maximise profitability. The idea of the 'railway family' allowed them to do this as it emphasised the benefits that employees and their dependants could secure as long as they remained loyal and hardworking. These included education, housing and welfare. Such paternalism was later replaced by

³ Howell, D., *Respectable Radicals: Studies in the politics of railway trade unionism* (Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 1999) p.8

industrial welfare practices that reinforced the idea of self-help, however the idea of the 'railway family' remained as a constant reminder of the bonds between the railway companies, their employees and family members. In contrast, trade unions were desirous of securing the membership of as many railwaymen as possible, in order to have the strongest bargaining position in their negotiations with railway companies. They too used the idea of the 'railway family' to attract members and allow those who would not traditionally be permitted into membership of the union, such as wives and daughters, the chance to participate in activities by giving them their own separate space, the women's trade union auxiliaries.

Research undertaken for this thesis will examine the railway industry as a whole, through the lens of the 'railway family', to create a more comprehensive picture of how railway companies and trade unions used the family ideology to foster loyalty towards the company and to engender solidarity within the trade union. Issues surrounding the deployment of the 'railway family' can also illuminate how women were perceived within the railway industry and an examination of the idea can allow for a better understanding of the roles they actually sought and filled.

1.1 Women and the idea of the 'railway family' in historical literature

The concept of the 'railway family' conjures different notions of family and kin relationships. During the period 1900 to 1948 ideas surrounding family, and the place of men, women and children within the family, shifted and altered to adapt to the social, economic and political changes that occurred within this period. A significant issue for this thesis is the roles that women played in the railway industry and how they

contributed to the idea of the 'railway family' in an industry that was dominated by men. Fundamentally, despite the acceptance of women into the railway workforce particularly during the two World Wars, the railway industry remained patriarchal and male-dominated throughout this period, and the female workforce was highly regulated into positions that were considered appropriate for women. In a strongly gender-segregated industry, these roles were closely defined by both railway companies and trade unions. These often mirrored traditional jobs undertaken by women in the home, for example in hospitality and catering, in stitching and sewing workshops and as cleaners.

Trade unions and railway companies viewed women significantly differently – women were always perceived to be a threat to male jobs throughout the period and were therefore considered a hostile force that needed to be contained by trade unions. Railway companies on the other hand were happy to employ women as they could be paid much less than men. However, they also held conventional assumptions about gender, the family and the role of women in society, especially the appropriate behaviour of railwaymen's wives. By considering the railway industry as a whole, rather than the attitude of discrete railway companies or trade unions, this study will examine the tensions between these attitudes, the ways that the railway companies and trade unions worked together and the centrality of the 'railway family' to the complex roles that women played in the railway industry.

In order to answer these questions, this thesis will consider the groups and institutions open to women including those for women workers and for non-working women, such as company sponsored welfare schemes and women's trade union auxiliaries. These auxiliaries were for the wives and daughters of trade union

railwaymen; the Railway Women's Guild was the women's auxiliary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS, later the National Union of Railwaymen, NUR) and the Women's Society was the auxiliary of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF). The introduction of a Railway Queen in 1925, a representative of the railway industry chosen from amongst the daughters of serving railwaymen, further enhanced the opportunities for women within the railway industry.

The role and agency of women in the railway industry has received scant historical attention. The few studies that consider women and railways focus on the employment of women or on women as passengers. The most pertinent example of this is Helena Wojtczak's *Railway Women: Exploitation, Betrayal and Triumph in the workplace* which concentrates on the changes in women's employment on the railways, their reluctant acceptance by trade unions and, in particular, the resistance they faced in a predominantly male industry.⁴ All of these issues were pertinent to the struggles faced by women during their working lives in the railway industry; however, Wojtczak's study fails to consider the reasons for this gradual revolution in the industry's attitude to women as workers, instead focusing on pioneering exceptions of women who were able to effect change in the industry. The struggles of women as trailblazing employees are an important aspect of the story but do not tell the full tale.

Rosa Matheson's study of women on the Great Western Railway counters Wojtczak's rather negative portrayal of women's experiences with a more positive

⁴ Wojtczak, Helena, *Railway Women: Exploitation, Betrayal and Triumph in the workplace* (Hastings Press, Hastings, 2005)

depiction of the progression of women into the higher grades of railway employment.⁵ Although Matheson does examine the difficulties that women faced in order to achieve these positions, she does not draw the battle lines quite as firmly as Wojtczak. This thesis will examine whether Matheson's more positive position on the roles women were able to play in the railway industry is accurate. It will be argued that women were able to exert some agency over decisions that were made concerning their position within the industry. This is particularly the case for non-working women, who have been side-lined in the debate thus far.

Women most commonly experienced the railway industry as passengers and consumers. Amy Richter, in *Home on the Rails*, a study of passenger trains in nineteenth century America, discusses the opposition women faced as passengers.⁶ In order to counter this opposition, railway companies created a separate, domestic sphere on carriages for female passengers which mimicked the home environment to which women were predominantly confined. Thus, Richter challenges the idea of railways as a masculine domain. Di Drummond has argued that the ideology of 'separate spheres', prevalent in the nineteenth and into the twentieth century, extended into railway carriages and onto railway stations. Railway stations could be seen as dangerous places for women because they were areas where people of different classes and genders mixed; in this way, compartment carriages, and especially those without corridors, heightened this sense of a threatening space.⁷ With the introduction of corridors and

⁵ Matheson, Rosa, *The Fair Sex: Women and the Great Western Railway* (Tempus Publishing, Stroud, 2007)

⁶ Richter, Amy, *Home on the Rails: Women, the Railroad and the rise of public domesticity* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2005)

⁷ Drummond, Diane 'The impact of the railway on the lives of women in the nineteenth-century city' in Roth, Ralf and Polino, Marie-Noelle, *The City and the Railway in Europe* (Ashgate Publishing, Aldershot, 2003) pp.245 - 248

ladies-only carriages, and the greater social freedom that women were granted throughout this period, railways began to be seen as less intimidating to women. Although this thesis does not focus on the experience of women as railway passengers and consumers, it is crucial to remember that this was the only way in which most women actually experienced the railway industry.

Women's trade union auxiliaries were created by male-dominated trade unions to allow women to play a supportive role, organising fundraising initiatives and social events which benefitted the union, but also the men, women and children associated with it. These women's trade union auxiliaries were spaces in which women could meet, learn more about trade union and labour politics and support the union in a variety of ways. It is important to note however that they were very much separate from the main trade union. This is a key feature of the ways trade unions utilised the idea of the 'railway family'; it was a way that the unions could create barriers to the participation of women in trade union matters. By encouraging women to join trade union auxiliaries, they were outwardly encouraging the involvement of women yet they were also keeping them separate from the main body of the union, in order not to cause concern amongst the male-dominated membership.

Such auxiliaries feature very little in the histories of railway trade unions. Bagwell's detailed study of the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) only briefly mentions the Railway Women's Guild, touching on its formation, aims and objectives and the role that the Guild branches undertook. Bagwell describes the Guild as an excellent fundraising organ for the union and as facilitators for many social events. He also praises the Guild for their work in recruiting the wives of non-union men into the

organisation and thus encouraging their husbands to follow suit.⁸ Howell also argues that the Railway Women's Guild was able to create a respectable sphere in which women could demonstrate their political commitment to the trade union and to the Labour Party. These women had a shared concern with railwaymen over railway work, which manifested itself in anxiety over housing, patterns of working hours and the occupational community.⁹ Although both Bagwell and Howell acknowledge the importance of the Railway Women's Guild to the National Union of Railwaymen, that is as far as their work on the subject goes.

The most comprehensive history of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) hagiographically describes the ASLEF Women's Society incorrectly as "the first Women's Society ever to be attached to a trade union in Britain."¹⁰ McKillop acknowledges the deprivations that railway work entailed for family life and the support that the Women's Society was able to provide for the union.¹¹ However, discussions regarding the scope of the ASLEF Women's Society and their effect on the union is curtailed, instead focusing on the struggles and achievements of railwaymen within the union.

Women's trade union auxiliaries in the USA have received greater attention from historians than in Britain. Melinda Chateauvert's work on the Ladies' Auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters is particularly key and demonstrates the important support auxiliaries could provide trade unions, both domestically and politically, for example through fundraising, organising social events and even joining

⁸ Bagwell, P., *The Railwaymen* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1963) pp.227 - 228

⁹ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p.8

¹⁰ McKillop, Norman, *The Lighted Flame* (Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd, Edinburgh, 1950) p.162

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p.163

marches and strikes. Unlike much of the current literature on British trade unions, this thesis will examine the agency of women's auxiliaries within patriarchal railway trade unions, their aims and the effect they had both on the women who were members and the wider 'railway family', through an in-depth study of the Railway Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society.

1.2 The idea of the 'railway family' – in theory and in practice

The idea of the 'railway family' is grounded in a number of different theories and concepts, primarily Benedict Anderson's work on 'imagined communities' which provides a framework for this study. However, the changing nature of family, kin and community relationships, the way that collective identities are formed and the way in which the language of the 'railway family' was created and understood are also key concepts that will be discussed in Chapter 2 and then utilised throughout the thesis. It is important to note that there are a number of leads that have developed out of this study of the 'railway family' that cannot be expanded upon due to a lack of time and space that will be explored further in Chapter 2.

The ways the 'railway family' was cultivated by railway companies and trade unions and how they deployed it through their respective magazines and newspapers will form a substantial basis for the study. There were subtle differences with the methods that railway companies and trade unions used to maintain and extend the idea of the 'railway family'. For railway companies the idea was a way that railwaymen and their family members could all be included in the business of the railway industry, and therefore could empathise with the company's concerns and act accordingly. For trade unions however, the 'railway family' was a means by which they could create

separate spaces for men and women in order to foster loyalty towards the trade union and each other without raising women's expectations of employment. The railway company magazines and trade union newspapers examined in this thesis are a testament to these disparities.

Chapter 3 will discuss how railway companies used the idea of the 'railway family' to create a loyal workforce who were responsive to their demands through a shared sense of occupational pride. The knowledge that they and their families would be taken care of by paternalistic employers who used industrial welfare practices to highlight this reciprocal arrangement was also an important facet of the 'railway family' from the companies' perspective. Chapter 4 will follow a similar pattern, discussing how trade unions used the idea of the 'railway family' to unite their diverse members and as a way to prevent female workers from challenging the male domination of the railway industry. Chapter 5 will focus on women's trade union auxiliaries and the spaces they created for women to express their own views on the 'railway family' and allow non-working women to create a version of the occupational community in which they were able to offer assistance to all members, both locally and nationally. It will also consider how the position of the Railway Queen provided further opportunities for women to enter the railway industry and thus enhance the 'railway family'

If railwaymen and their family members did not accept and identify with the idea of the 'railway family' then it was worthless. To investigate its effectiveness, Gloucester will be used as a case study in order to examine the idea in practice and particularly how railwaymen and their families drew on it to create a closely bonded occupational community. An important facet of Chapter 6 is the examination of the

women's trade union auxiliaries in Gloucester including their membership, their aims and how effective they were in meeting the needs of women locally, nationally and within the idea of the 'railway family'.

1.3 The benefits of studying the 'railway family'

The idea of the 'railway family' is not a new concept. However, this thesis uses it in a new way to study the relationship between railwaymen, railway companies and trade unions. The idea of the 'railway family' allows for a greater understanding of where these institutions converged with individuals and where the fracture lines emerged during the first half of the twentieth century, which has ramifications even today. The idea of the 'railway family' continues to be utilised by railway companies, trade unions and railway workers and their family members as a way to express how they understand their role within the nation's railway industry in a very similar way to their counterparts over seventy years ago. This demonstrates just how important the idea of the 'railway family' is in terms of a study of the railway industry – it has a proven resilience that many other tools designed to engender loyalty, community and a reciprocal relationship between institutions and individuals have failed to inspire.

This thesis also provides an extra dimension for the study of women's history. Male-dominated trade unions are not usually considered a fruitful arena for a consideration of the role of women in work. However, it will be argued here that male-dominated unions *had* to deal with women because they encroached upon the workplace due to social and political developments in the twentieth century. A less controversial, but also less well represented view is that trade unions also interacted with the wives and female relatives of their members, who could offer a variety of

support skills and experience if utilised in the correct way. Railway trade union auxiliaries are an excellent example of the way that male-dominated unions could successfully mobilise women. They chose to engage with women through an auxiliary structure, designed to inspire these women to identify with the trade union. Perhaps surprisingly for many members, both male and female, women's auxiliaries allowed their members to develop a keener sense of their own identity as women, wives and mothers and participate in avenues of citizenship that were gradually being opened up to them: campaigning for political reform, voting and standing for election for political and civic office.

The creation of an occupational community is a key facet of this study. The idea of the 'railway family' can reveal more about the way these communities were created and how they derived their strength. It demonstrates how the relationships between work colleagues and friends could become similar to kin relationships, especially amongst a community that was forced to move across the country for promotion. This meant that railwaymen and their families often clustered together in one area of a town or city. For this thesis, it has been possible to map the occupational community of Gloucester from the minutebooks of the Railway Women's Guild, which recorded the names and addresses of new members. This will show that the railway community of Gloucester changed little over time. It will also chart the rise and fall of membership of the Guild, in line with other women's auxiliaries of the period and reflect the easing of tensions between railway companies and trade unions, in part through the idea of the 'railway family'.

Finally, this study is a collaboration with the National Railway Museum (NRM), York. The idea of the 'railway family' can enhance the interpretation of the diverse

collections held at the museum by adding a new dimension through which they can be displayed. It will allow for the development of a greater understanding of the role of the 'railway family' in the creation of occupational communities and the relationship that was created between railway companies, trade unions, railwaymen and their family members. The importance of women to the railway industry should not be underemphasised and this thesis is poised to make a positive contribution to the story of women and the railways told at the NRM and within transport history in general. To date, this collaborative effort has resulted in a number of public engagement projects including blogs, posters and conference papers that have begun to tell the story of the 'railway family' to a wider audience.

Chapter 2. AN ‘IMAGINED COMMUNITY’

An ‘imagined community’ is one in which members are stretched across wide geographical areas and have never met one another yet feel as if they are part of the same group due to the fact that they all share the same priorities, hopes and concerns. This chapter will begin by exploring the concepts behind the ‘railway family’ as it was imagined in theory and in practice. This is crucial to the overall thesis because it underpins the rationale for a study of both extended social networks and the dual nature of the idea of the ‘railway family’. This duality emerges due to the fact that the idea was created by railway companies and trade unions but was also readily accepted and lived by railwaymen and their families, with some modifications. The ‘railway family’ as a conscious collective allows us to see regularities and areas where the ideas and attitudes of railway companies, trade unions and railwaymen and their non-working family members converged, but similarly exposes the fault lines where they diverged.¹² According to Stacey, who wrote about the ‘myth of community studies’, “Social relations must be seen not only in combination with each other but in the dimensions of time and space.”¹³ This thesis will examine how the idea of the ‘railway family’ was manipulated, understood and altered over time by railway companies and trade unions in different geographical locations. This chapter goes on to include a literature review of the historiography of family dynamics *per se*, the language of the

¹² Tosh, John, *The Pursuit of History. Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (Longman, London, 1984) p.134

¹³ Stacey, Margaret, ‘The Myth of Community Studies’, *The British Journal of Sociology*, 20, 2 (1969) p.139

‘railway family’, plus scrutiny of the methodological approach undertaken in this thesis. The latter foregrounds a discussion of the archival sources analysed to understand the idea of the ‘railway family’ from multiple perspectives.

2.1 The ‘railway family’

The term ‘railway family’ meant a number of different things to different people including those who were connected to the railway industry and those who were not. There were both positive and negative connotations attached to the term; whilst this thesis focuses primarily on the former due to the sources studied, it is also important to understand how and why negative impressions of the ‘railway family’ emerged. Depending on their personal experiences with the railway industry, family and community, the idea of the ‘railway family’ may have been viewed in different ways by the men, women and children who were connected to it and by it. In his thesis on the Taff Vale Railway Company, Dudley Clarke examined the ‘sphere of influence’ through which the Taff Vale employees were connected. Their workplace overlapped with the Trade Union branches, which were linked to the Public House and club. Within this sphere, the neighbourhood also overlapped with the family, which overlapped with the Chapel or Church that in turn was connected with the cultural society and the friendly society.¹⁴ In Crewe in 1849 for example, the railway company owned houses, churches, schools, a town hall, public baths and hospitals.¹⁵ It was possible that elements of the

¹⁴ Clarke, Dudley, *Revolt and Revival in the Valleys: The Influence of Religion and Revivalism on the Politics and Labour Relations of the Taff Vale Railway, South Wales, 1878 – 1914* (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of Leeds, 2012) p.113

¹⁵ Drummond, Diane, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People, 1840 – 1914* (Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1995) pp.14-15

'railway family' emerged in all of these interlinked spheres, especially when they were so closely related to the railway companies or trade unions. However, other discrete communities may also have been formed around these institutions: "Company enterprise and bricks and mortar could not make a community."¹⁶ Depending on their own personal experiences with family relationships, the idea of the 'railway family' may also have been problematic for railwaymen or their family members, despite the positive spin placed upon the notion of family by railway companies and trade unions.

Drummond has argued that in Crewe, the workplace was an important juncture in creating distinctive cultures and social groupings within local society. The customs and practices in workshops and offices led railway employees to form an identity around their common interests and daily interactions, although it is important to note that this does not necessarily have to involve the railway companies or their wishes for the 'railway family'.¹⁷ This is especially the case where religion, and non-conformism in Crewe, was concerned. According to Drummond, non-conformism in Crewe "bestowed far more than a culture that was free from Company influences. It also gave the coerced nonconformist employees of the Works a fierce sense of their own worth as Christian men."¹⁸ Despite an involvement with the company version of the 'railway family', there were many other avenues of community and solidarity open to railwaymen and their families.

Railway company employees also had contact with men from other railway companies, members of other Trade Unions and Trade Councils.¹⁹ These "could have a

¹⁶ Ibid., p.19

¹⁷ Ibid., p.39

¹⁸ Ibid., p.147

¹⁹ Clarke, *Revolt and Revival*, p.116

distinct effect on his thinking” and allowed railwaymen to compare their pay and conditions with workers from other companies and from other industries.²⁰ It was at this juncture that the idea of ‘railway family’ had the potential to harness negative feelings of railwaymen towards their employers if these comparisons were unfavourable and thus solidify the connections to railway trade unions. The ‘railway family’ was only one potential community that railwaymen and their family members could participate in, and the intersection of the ‘railway family’ with other aspects of community, industry and family life was crucial in how this idea was viewed by those who participated in it, rather than those who curated it through the railway press.

Within the railway press at the time, and the historical literature that has followed, the term railway family has often been used to describe generations of family members who worked in the railway industry. Such usage can be seen most particularly in the railway company magazines. However, ‘railway family’ can also be used theoretically to help us understand the ‘imagined’ railway community. The idea of the ‘railway family’ is an example of an historical model. Peter Burke has described a model as “an intellectual construct which simplifies reality in order to emphasise the recurrent, the general and the typical, which it presents in the form of clusters of traits or attributes.”²¹ The idea of the ‘railway family’ and the language associated with it was utilised by railway companies and trade unions throughout the first half of the twentieth century and it was applied to all those who worked in the railway industry and their non-working family members. This thesis is the first occasion when the idea of the ‘railway family’ is used as a scholarly historical tool. The discussion on this model

²⁰ Ibid., p.136

²¹ Burke, Peter, *History and Social Theory* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005) 2nd Edition, p.27

of the 'railway family' that occurs during this and the following four chapters can help to illuminate how the idea ran alongside, and later came to supersede, railway company paternalism; how trade unions used the idea to mobilise the non-working women they chose to exclude from their ranks; and how the idea of the 'railway family' was used as a tool to inspire the support and loyalty of those within and connected to the railway industry. Chapter 6 will examine how the idea of the 'railway family' played out in practice as a lived experience for railwaymen and their family members.

Although the idea of the 'railway family' emphasises the cohesion, solidarity and social consensus that railway companies and trade unions were intending to inspire, this thesis also reflects on the areas of conflict and tension that emerged within the 'railway family' and between railway companies and trade unions.²² This was particularly the case with issues that surrounded women and their inclusion within the 'railway family', especially as workers and as full trade union members, rather than as limited auxiliary members.

Not only was the idea of the 'railway family' used enthusiastically by railway companies and trade unions, it was also accepted and internalised by railwaymen and their households, relations, colleagues and friends. They used the language of the 'railway family' in their contributions to the newspapers and magazines and the way that railwaymen and their non-working family members acted towards one another, both inside and outside of the workplace, suggested that the family values that they held for their own kin were also applied to those within the wider community of the 'railway family'. This chapter will go some way in explaining why this was the case, and

²² Ibid., p.27

discuss how this thesis has been constructed, before subsequent chapters demonstrate how effective the idea of the 'railway family' was for many of those connected to the railway industry.

2.2 'Imagined Communities'

Benedict Anderson's seminal work on the origins of Nationalism, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* is crucial to a study of the 'railway family'.²³ Although Anderson was using the idea of an 'imagined community' as his definition for the nation-state, this thesis will argue that the theory can also be adapted to conceptualise how the idea of the 'railway family' was formed and understood. As Anderson states in his definition of an 'imagined community', these communities are imagined because most people will never know all members of their nation but can imagine them in "communion" together. They are defined in the ways in which they are imagined, for example as a family, a society or as kinship networks.²⁴ However, Anderson places the emphasis on the 'imagined' aspects of the community, and particularly the negative connotations of this, for example, "Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings."²⁵ This thesis however will attempt to discover where the lines blurred between the 'imagined'

²³ Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined Communities. Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (Verso, London, 2006) Revised Edition

²⁴ Ibid., p.6

²⁵ Ibid., p.7. P.201 for example also discusses "reassuring fratricide" as part of 'family history', a technique for extending the 'imagined community'.

railway community and how it was lived in practice, through the idea of the 'railway family' in a more positive sense than many of Anderson's discussions.

The idea of the 'railway family' stretched across the railway network in Britain – it was impossible for all railway employees and their family members to meet one another as the railway companies employed hundreds of thousands of men and women throughout the period.²⁶ The 'imagined community' of the 'railway family' allowed for the creation of a sense of co-operative spirit between all grades of railwaymen and their non-working family members. According to Anderson, the national community was imbued with a spirit of fraternal comradeship, despite the inequalities that existed. This was certainly the case for the 'railway family'. The highest paid members earned over twice that of the lowest paid, but the bond of fraternity was often demonstrated amongst many railwaymen.²⁷

Anderson also emphasises the role of print culture in the creation of an 'imagined community'. The idea is key to this thesis, which uses railway company magazines and trade union newspapers to investigate how these institutions created, maintained and extended the idea of the 'railway family'. Anderson argues that the act of reading newspapers was one way that a national 'imagined community' was created, as all members of the community were given the same information and were able to

²⁶ For example, a census of staff before and after WW1 records 639,323 employees in 1913 and 766,381 in 1921, taken from *The Railway Gazette*, 35, 10 (1921) p.380 whilst a census of staff in 1935 records 580,766 railway employees, taken from *The Railway Gazette*, 63, 10 (1935) p.358

²⁷ *ASRS Report on Census of Wages, Hours and Labour of the men employed on the Railways of the United Kingdom* (London, 1908) pp. 10 – 11. These figures are based on the wages of the lowest grades of staff working for the Great Western and Midland railway companies, for example, GWR porters were paid 17 shillings and 10 pence a week on average whilst drivers earned 37 shillings and 9 pence. In 1929 London Midland and Scottish railway company drivers earned over twice that of engine cleaners; this was a result of age, training and skill level required for these roles, from London Midland and Scottish railway company, *Conditions of Service of Conciliation Grades*, 1929, p.1 and p.51

learn of the same news stories.²⁸ This helps to explain the competition that arose between railway companies and trade unions when referring to the 'railway family' – their newspapers and magazines created separate communities through the information they gave out and the way it was presented. However, the 'railway family' also came to represent the occupational community of railwaymen and their families which transcended the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers.

A specific language associated with the idea of the 'railway family' was created by the journalists and editors of these newspapers and magazines, which acted as an inclusive base level for those within the idea of the 'railway family' to understand the part they played in a wider railway community. The language of the 'railway family' could also be exclusive however, excluding those who were not part of the defined community, for example neighbours who worked in different industries, which divided members of the same class along occupational lines. Those who proved to be a challenge to the idea of the 'railway family', in particular female railway workers, were also excluded from the 'railway family' with the use of particular language.

Anderson has also discussed the nature of this inclusive and exclusive language with regard to national anthems and poems which represent the 'imagined community' of the nation stating, "there is a special kind of contemporaneous community which language alone suggested"²⁹. The editorial language of the 'railway family' had its parallel in articles, letters, poems and stories that appeared in railway company and trade union newspapers. As many of these were written by railway employees across different departments (rather than just those employed and instructed by the company

²⁸ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.35

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p.145

or trade union to contribute to the newspaper) this suggests that railway workers and their non-working family members bought into the idea of the 'railway family' and were happy to use the language associated with their 'imagined community'. An example of this is a poem featured in the ASLEF *Locomotive Journal*, which appealed for donations to help the widow and ten children of an ASLEF member killed on the footplate by referring both to his dependant wife and children but also appealing to fellow trade union members as his brothers, "...And now his duty he has done,/ He has gone where enemies he has none;/ Just help his family in their need,/ and see the children get a feed/ ...Now Brothers to you the last appeal!/ Just put your shoulder to the wheel,/ And see if you can spare a penny/ To provide some meals where there are many."³⁰ The language of the 'railway family' will be discussed further in Section 2.5

By using what he terms "family history", Anderson argues that referring to events that contributed towards the history of the 'imagined community' creates a sense of a shared past between all members.³¹ Railway company and trade union newspapers often featured articles that glorified past achievements of the company or union. An article in the Great Western Railway Magazine, titled 'The Boys of the Old Brigade' celebrated retired Great Western railwaymen, stating that they "look back with pride upon their service with the Company. With pride – and, indeed, with affection also, are they themselves remembered by their friends and former colleagues."³² By establishing a shared history between members of the 'railway family', the railway companies and trade unions were reminding the wider railway

³⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 30, 4 (1917) p.132

³¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.201

³² *Great Western railway company magazine (GWRM)*, 48, 10 (1936) p.497

community of their past achievements, which were only possible when they all worked together. Eventually, all railwaymen would become 'old boys' and this inclusive community was created to ensure that the idea of the 'railway family' lived on even after retirement. Ill health was also no barrier to participation in the 'railway family' as railway convalescent homes, provided for railwaymen and their wives and children, were advertised in the magazines and praised in glowing articles as to the good work they were able to do to restore the 'railway family' back to full health. The connection between diverse patients at the railwaywomen's convalescent home in Margate was described in the Great Western magazine as "whether typist or the wife of a ganger, they all had the one common link – they were railway folk."³³ By utilising their newspapers and magazines the railway companies and trade unions were also extending the idea of the 'railway family', and its shared history, to members who had only just commenced their railway service and to the children of railway workers in pre-emptive preparation for their railway career.

Finally, Anderson argues that it is difficult "to explain the *attachment* that peoples feel for inventions of their imaginations" again emphasising the importance, albeit negative, Anderson placed on the 'imagined' nature of the communities.³⁴ Yet, just because these attachments are difficult to explain does not mean that attempts should not be made.³⁵ As Jenkins argues, "although those identities are imagined; they

³³ GWRM, 42, 8 (1930) p.336

³⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.141. Author's emphasis

³⁵ Desai, Radhika, 'The inadvertence of Benedict Anderson. A review essay of *Imagined Communities* on the occasion of a new edition', *Global and Media Communication*, 4, 2 (2008) p.190. Desai argues that Anderson's focus on the attachments felt towards the nation-state is too all encompassing, and states that it is possible to have similar attachments to other institutions and identities, as this thesis will argue.

are not imaginary.”³⁶ The ‘railway family’ existed in occupational communities in many towns and cities across Britain. This thesis will attempt to understand why railway companies and trade unions were so committed to the idea of the ‘railway family’ and how, and why, railway workers and their non-working family members also chose to invest in the idea and embrace the ‘railway family’ within their everyday lives at work and at home.

Anderson’s theory of ‘imagined communities’ has been applied by historians to other non-nationalist contexts in different time periods, with different groups of individuals, and adapted to refine the theory with regard to smaller communities. This exemplifies the fact that there were many different communities that railwaymen and their families could join – whether occupational, religious, national or familial. Some of these were imagined, others took on a more physical form: the idea of the ‘railway family’ straddles both and will be explored in this thesis in both forms. Although Anderson’s concept of ‘imagined communities’ can carry negative connotations, the idea of the ‘railway family’ presented in this thesis primarily explores the positive functions the real and ‘imagined’ railway community was able to convey due to the nature of the sources available.

David Gilbert discusses ‘imagined communities’ in relation to mining communities in Britain during the twentieth century. He argues that Anderson idealises local communities and hence minimises the negative impact that the exclusion of minority groups from wider ‘imagined communities’ can have.³⁷ According

³⁶ Jenkins, Richard, *Social Identity* (Routledge, London, 2008) p.175

³⁷ Gilbert, David, ‘Imagined Communities and mining communities’, *Labour History Review*, 60, 2 (1995) p.47 and p.52

to Gilbert, industrial communities, and in particular mining communities, were excluded or “grudgingly accommodated” into the national English ‘imagined community’ which focused on an idealised, rural, non-industrial identity.³⁸ An excellent example of this is the hymn, ‘Jerusalem’ which was based upon a poem by William Blake written in 1810 and set to music by Sir Hubert Parry in 1916 with lines including, “Walk upon England’s mountains green”, “On England’s pleasant pastures seen” and conversely, “And was Jerusalem builded here,/Amongst these dark Satanic mills?/...”³⁹ Railway communities, as discussed in Chapter 6 with a focus on Gloucester, were often more integrated into larger towns and cities than the rural and socially isolated mining communities that Gilbert’s work focuses on. This had the potential to reduce the exclusion and segregation that these industrial communities faced.⁴⁰

However, aspects of exclusion were present amongst some elements of railway communities. This was particularly the case for those families who were unhappy when children chose not to follow fathers into the railway workplace, or if those who had been ‘spoken for’ and had secured a job subsequently brought disgrace onto family members by their behaviour at work. As Charles Taylor describes of his experience as an apprentice at Crewe Locomotive Works, “My parentage was a mixed blessing, sometimes providing a bonus but there were times when I was told, “I don’t think your father would like to see you doing that.”⁴¹ This placed pressure on children or other family members to behave in the ‘right’ way. Those who spoke for potential employees

³⁸ Ibid., p.47

³⁹ Blake, William, *Preface to Milton a Poem* (1810), Poetry Foundation (2017) <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems-and-poets/poems/detail/54684> [27/3/2017]

⁴⁰ Gilbert, ‘Imagined Communities’, p.48

⁴¹ Taylor, Charles, *Life in a Loco Works. First-hand experiences of a Crewe engineering apprentice during wartime* (Oxford Publishing Company, Yeovil, 1995) p.24

were conscious that their reputation depended on the behaviour of their family members and these individuals were made aware that they were required to uphold the family name.

This reflects the high degree of social control that railway companies (and trade unions) were able to exert over railwaymen and their family members through the idea of the 'railway family'. This control existed alongside the more formal disciplinary measures taken by these institutions. It has often been argued that social control was exerted by middle-class men and women over their working-class counterparts through a variety of religious and philanthropic institutions which attempted to regulate their leisure time.⁴² By 1900 however, the leisure pursuits of working-class families were fairly static and considered 'respectable'. These included seaside holidays, watching football matches, and visiting music halls or, after 1914, the cinema. The home and family also became fundamental to working-class leisure time.⁴³ Thompson has argued that work was one of the central tenets of working-class life and therefore was important in the formation of attitudes and beliefs.⁴⁴ According to Heeley, "Employers saw leisure as an important social responsibility and were to the fore in providing their employees with facilities for rational recreation."⁴⁵ The facilities that were provided included parks, Mechanics Institutes, sports teams and societies which in themselves were able to exert a degree of social control over railway employees and their families in leisure time. Wright has argued that the Mechanics'

⁴² Thompson, F.M.L., 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', *The Economy History Review*, 34, 2 (1981) p.191

⁴³ Bailey, Peter, 'Leisure, culture and the historian: reviewing the first generation of leisure historiography in Britain', *Leisure Studies*, 8, 2 (1989) pp.109-110

⁴⁴ Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', p.204

⁴⁵ Heeley, John, 'Leisure and moral reform', *Leisure Studies*, 5, 1 (1986) p.62

Institutes, provided by railway companies in certain towns and cities, were managed by middle-class councils who “endeavoured to inculcate ‘respectable values’ in the section of the working classes that passed through the institute’s doors”.⁴⁶ It is important to note that, according to Thompson, there was a large gap between the aspirations of those who desired to implement social control and their actual achievements; many of the desirable tenets of “association, mutual help and protection, preservation of the sense of group and community and refusal to retreat to the social isolation of the individual family” which employers and trade unions sought to instil amongst members of the ‘railway family’ were not the product of middle-class intrusion but were defined and policed by working-class men and women themselves.⁴⁷ A thorough study of social control within the ‘railway family’ would necessitate a separate thesis in order to examine the multiple facets through which it can emerge – spiritual, military, legal, educational or financial.⁴⁸ However, there will be some elements of the way the ‘railway family’ acted as an agent of social control that emerge within this thesis.

The language of the ‘railway family’ was used to exclude those who had transgressed the bounds of the social control exerted by the ‘railway family’ or by railway companies and trade unions. Female railway workers also counter the inclusionary nature of the ‘railway family’ and their experiences will be discussed throughout this thesis, but most prominently in Chapter 4, which considers their relationship to the trade unions who viewed them as a threatening force throughout

⁴⁶Wright, Gerry, 'Discussions of the characteristics of mechanics' institutes in the second half of the nineteenth century: the Bradford example' *Journal of Educational Administration and History*, 33, 1 (2001) p.6

⁴⁷ Thompson, 'Social Control in Victorian Britain', p.207

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.206

the period. The 'railway family' was crucial in policing the norms through which respectable behaviour was established; family, friends and kin were amongst the most important elements of informal social control.⁴⁹ The acceptance of this occupational community and the internalisation of the rules and norms which guided appropriate behaviour was an important way in which the idea of the 'railway family' functioned.⁵⁰

In her study of Poplar in the 1920s, Gillian Rose argues that the way residents described their experience of the community exemplifies Anderson's definition of the 'imagined community', and most explicitly the "horizontal comradeship" that existed.⁵¹ The term "horizontal comradeship" describes the sense of community created between members in the local community who were of a similar social and economic status and was evident in the way they experienced Poplar. For example, "It was a warm place, the East End...it was a community. People helped one another."⁵² She argues that it is not Anderson who idealises these communities, but those who are doing the imagining.⁵³ This is a crucial discussion for the idea of the 'railway family', particularly when one considers the autobiographies and oral histories of railwaymen, who have often been accused of looking back at their past lives and employment in the railway industry through rose-tinted spectacles.⁵⁴ This study will seek to understand how the idea of the 'railway family' was imagined not only by railway companies and trade unions but also by railwaymen and their non-working family members, alongside how

⁴⁹Chriss, James J., *Social Control. An Introduction* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 2013) 2nd Edition, p.3

⁵⁰ Ibid., p.26

⁵¹ Rose, Gillian, 'Imagining Poplar in the 1920s: Contested concepts of community', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 16, 4 (1990) p.427

⁵² Ibid., p.427

⁵³ Ibid., p.427

⁵⁴ Strangleman, Tim, 'Constructing the past: Railway history from below or a study in nostalgia?', *Journal of Transport History*, 23, 2 (2002) pp.147 - 148

the occupational community and 'railway family' in Gloucester worked in practice. It is crucial to study the 'railway family' in this way in order to understand how the 'imagined community' was created and lived across Britain and in one particular microcosm.

Lizzie Seal's work on 'imagined communities' and the death penalty in Britain states that all 'imagined communities' are constantly in flux.⁵⁵ This was certainly the case for the idea of the 'railway family', which was extended by railway companies and trade unions to include not only railwaymen, but also female railway workers, non-working wives and children at various times during the period. At times, women workers were excluded, or only partly considered members of the 'railway family', due to the perceptions of railwaymen and their concern for their own position within the industry in terms of jobs and wages. This was particularly the case for women workers in relation to the trade unions, who were more hostile to female employment than the railway companies. The idea of the 'railway family' as imagined by railway companies or trade unions was dependant on the economic, political and social situation of the country as a whole but also with specific reference to the priorities of their business. From the railway companies' perspective, this was to ensure a happy workforce who would make the company a healthy profit whilst for trade unions, this was to fight for the rights and benefits of their members, namely railwaymen. Issues such as the extension of the franchise to all men and women, two World Wars, an economic depression and the development of an international community of working-class men

⁵⁵ Seal, Lizzie, 'Imagined Communities and the Death Penalty in Britain, 1930 – 1965', *British Journal of Criminology*, 54 (2014) p.910

and women were factors in the fluctuation of the approved membership of the 'railway family' over the period.

The way that local occupational communities were created is also a focus for this thesis and Anderson's work is influential in the discussion but is not adopted wholesale or uncritically. Alan O'Day's work focuses on the creation of Irish immigrant communities in the USA and England. This resonates in the discussion on the formation of occupational communities as there was a high level of movement for railway workers from one town to another. O'Day argues that the creation of 'imagined communities' amongst Irish émigrés brought together disparate people and allowed to them to reinterpret their own experiences from a shared national perspective, rather than a local one.⁵⁶ If we consider this from the perspective of the railway industry, the idea of the 'railway family' allowed migrants moving from one town to another to join a new occupational community that was not just linked through a local identity but through one that was accepted across the railway network. This then made the transition easier for the railway companies and their employees, but also the families of railwaymen, who had familiar institutions on which they could rely as part of the 'railway family'.

The gendered nature of the 'railway family' in theory and in practice is a key area of study. Gillian Rose's work recognises that gender affected the ways that members identified with the local community in Poplar. Rose argues that men did identify with their community, but often in ways that reinforced their masculinity, for

⁵⁶ O'Day, Alan, 'Imagined Irish Communities: Networks of Social Communication of the Irish Diaspora in the United State and Britain in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 23, 2-3 (2005) p.407

example through their support of local boxers.⁵⁷ Physical work and strength was a marker of working-class masculinity.⁵⁸ Railway clerks suffered in this respect because they were not seen by other working-class men as manual labourers, nor were they considered by middle class men to have the necessary freedom from patronage that would have elevated their status.⁵⁹ Clerical work was “stigmatised as ‘unmanly’ even before women entered the occupation in large numbers”.⁶⁰ In this respect, railway clerks were often the first to volunteer for deployment during wartime, perhaps in an attempt to secure their fragile masculine identity.⁶¹

Masculinity is an incredibly diverse subject of historical analysis and there is “no single history of men and masculinities”.⁶² Although this thesis briefly touches on aspects of masculinity associated with work, family and leisure, the historical literature on this subject is too broad to be comprehensively analysed within the context of the railway industry and within the scope of this work. Tosh has argued that it is crucial to ground the study of gender within the real-life experience of men and women and the case study included within this examination of the ‘railway family’ intends to do just that.⁶³ Whilst the focus of this thesis is not on the construction of masculinity, it is important to understand how masculine identity can interact with the construction of

⁵⁷ Rose, ‘Imagining Poplar’, p.428

⁵⁸ Tosh, John, ‘What Should Historians do with Masculinity? Reflections on Nineteenth-century Britain’, *History Workshop*, 38 (1994) p.186

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.186

⁶⁰ Lockwood, David, *The Blackcoated Worker* (Unwin University Books, London, 1958) p.123

⁶¹ Tosh, ‘What Should Historians do with Masculinity?’, p.194. Although Tosh is discussing the Boer War and volunteer army units, *The Railway Clerk* lists the thousands of railway clerks who joined up, or were enlisted, in both the First and Second World Wars.

⁶² Seidler, Victor Jeleniewski, ‘Masculinities, Histories and Memories’ in Arnold, John. H., and Brady, Sean (eds.) *What is Masculinity? Historical Dynamics from Antiquity to the Contemporary World* (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2011) p.449

⁶³ Tosh, John, ‘The History of Masculinity: An Outdated Concept?’ in Arnold and Brady, *What is Masculinity?*, p.32

a feminine identity, the family and women's history in general.⁶⁴ However, gender rarely stands alone in the formation of identity and it would be remiss to focus solely on this aspect when considering the idea of the 'railway family'.⁶⁵

The idea of the 'railway family' as an 'imagined community' was understood and exploited by men and women in a variety of different ways. As Tosh has argued, "the gendered study of men must be indispensable to any serious feminist historical project."⁶⁶ The 'railway family' was constructed around strongly gendered lines which upheld traditional notions of masculinity and femininity. The way in which working-class men constructed their masculinity was centred around their work, their leisure (particularly male-only associations) and their family.⁶⁷ The concept of the male breadwinner in particular placed a great deal of emphasis on masculinity being linked to employment and wages.⁶⁸ Unemployment was a blow to masculine identity, not only because it impoverished families but because it severely compromised the perceived masculinity of those men due to their inability to provide for their families as the breadwinner.⁶⁹

This all fed into the idea of the 'railway family' which was intended to centre on these aspects of a railwayman's life – his work, his trade union membership and the role he played within the family. Tosh also argues that masculinity was based on "self-control, hard work and independence", values that were important to railway

⁶⁴ Roper, Michael and Tosh, John (eds.) *Manful Assertions. Masculinities in Britain since 1800* (Routledge, London, 1991) p.8

⁶⁵ Arnold and Brady, *What is Masculinity?*, p.4

⁶⁶ Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?', p.179

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p.181 and p.184

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p.185

⁶⁹ Stevenson, John and Cook, Chris, *The Slump: Britain in the Great Depression. Third Edition* (Pearson Education Ltd, Harlow, 2010) pp.94-98 describes the research done into the psychological effect of unemployment during the 1930s

companies and trade unions alike.⁷⁰ The traditional 'Victorian values' of deference and respectability were also highly valued by railway companies.⁷¹ Respectability in particular was prized by both railwaymen and their wives. These values contributed towards a particular working-class masculine identity for railway workers and can be seen as a way in which employment was influencing the home life and leisure activities of railwaymen and their families. Again, it was also a way that the 'railway family' was extended as a method of social control by railway companies and trade unions.

The idea of the 'railway family' was often identified to railwaymen as a way that they could support each other and also support their families in times of distress, feeding into this traditional masculine role. This was especially the case from the trade union perspective: railwaymen were brothers and protectors under the banner of the 'railway family'. An excellent example of this was the re-working of Rudyard Kipling's poem 'If' which appeared in the ASLEF Locomotive Journal in 1919, with the lines "If he asks himself the question, can he truly say that he/ is worthy of that motto: "Brothers in Unity"?/ If you hold the hand of Friendship to a comrade when he's down,/ and help him when misfortune comes - not pass him by and frown;".⁷²

For many women, the 'railway family' was primarily a way that they could take care of their families and each other. The foundation of the ASLEF Women's Society after the 1924 locomotivemen's strike demonstrates this concern. During this strike, women provided support and assistance to their husbands and the families of other striking railwaymen. On the inauguration of the first Women's Society branch it was

⁷⁰ Tosh, 'What Should Historians do with Masculinity?', p.183

⁷¹ Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, pp.195-196. Drummond argues that there was a scale of deference in Crewe which railwaymen subscribed to, often depending on their possession of the vote.

⁷² *Locomotive Journal*, 32, 5 (1919) p.140

stated that “Strikes actually hit the women harder than the men, as any reduction in wages or worsening of conditions was bound to reflect on home life”.⁷³ As such, any support women’s societies were able to give trade unions during labour unrest, to their fundraising efforts and in enabling railwaymen and their families to socialise together cemented the ‘railway family’ as a support network. The involvement of women in politics especially after the end of the First World War was driven by the unique contribution it was felt they could make on issues that affected other women and children from their unique perspective as women, wives and mothers.⁷⁴ At a local and national level the policies that women campaigned for were concerned with education, housing, welfare and other perceived ‘women’s issues’ that centred on home and family and thus strongly affected the ‘railway family’.⁷⁵

Anderson’s work has not been viewed in a wholly positive light by other historians and Anthony Marx has critiqued Anderson, arguing that his work on ‘imagined communities’ envisions primarily a cohesive community. He claims that language could be “exclusive and divisive” and print culture was able to spread messages which increased tensions and conflict between nations and those within them.⁷⁶ The language of the ‘railway family’ was at once both exclusionary by its nature, but also designed to ease any conflicts that may have arisen amongst members. It acted to exclude those not connected to the railway industry by using terminology that only

⁷³ *Locomotive Journal*, 37, 6 (1924) p.221

⁷⁴ Graves, Pamela, *Labour Women: Women in British Working-Class Politics, 1918-1939* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1994) p.8

⁷⁵ Pugh, Martin, *Women and the Women’s Movement in Britain* (Macmillan, Hampshire, 1992) 2nd Edition, 2000 p.132. Pugh’s work includes a discussion of the issues that women voters believed to be crucial – political parties often focused on these, and side-lined other ‘women’s issues’ that they considered to be too controversial or divisive such as divorce reform or abortion law.

⁷⁶ Marx, Anthony, *Faith in Nation. Exclusionary Origins of Nationalism* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003) p.192

those associated with the industry would understand. However, the language of the 'railway family' was also used to ensure that there was a sense of commonality and unity between those who worked on the railways or were connected to it through family members. By acting to exclude others, the language of the 'railway family' was also emphasising to railwaymen and their family members that they were part of an exclusive 'club' that not everyone could join.

The language of the 'railway family' was not organic. It was not created wholly by those who it came to describe but was generated and maintained by railway companies and trade unions and adopted by railwaymen and their families. In a similar way, Anthony Marx rejects Anderson's implications that there was no 'state' intervention in the creation of an 'imagined community'. The idea of the 'railway family' aligns with Marx's argument: it was also prompted by institutional intervention from railway companies and trade unions.⁷⁷ As Melanie Tebbutt has described in her case study of working-class life in Northampton in the twentieth century, "consensual rhetoric" appeared in local newspapers because local civic leaders were also local businessmen and employers.⁷⁸ In this way, employers were able to influence their employees subconsciously (or more unashamedly) through the language they used in newspapers. However, as employers were also civic leaders they had a responsibility to ensure that they also worked for the local community.⁷⁹ To some, this may have been a notional responsibility which they failed to undertake but other business owners and

⁷⁷ Ibid. p.15

⁷⁸ Tebbutt, Melanie, 'Imagined Families and Vanished Communities: Memories of Working-Class life in Northampton', *History Workshop Journal*, 73 (2012) p.151

⁷⁹ Hughes, Stephen, 'Social Archaeology: A Possible Methodology of the Study of Workers' Settlements based on the 18th- and 19th- Century Copper Industry of Swansea', in Barker, David and Cranstone, David (eds.) *The Archaeology of Industrialization* (Maney Publishing, Leeds, 2004) p.144

civic leaders took their responsibilities seriously and acted for the (perceived) good of their community. Railway companies in particular were keen to utilise this “consensual rhetoric” to emphasise their paternalism, and later their industrial welfare practices, which they believed benefitted employees, their families, the company and often the towns which they constructed or helped to develop.

Alan O'Day has also criticised Anderson's definition of an 'imagined community'. He argues that Anderson has effectively described the formation of 'imagined communities', but not the different layers of the 'imagined community', or how people move from high levels of investment in the idea to lower levels and vice versa.⁸⁰ This thesis will demonstrate how the 'imagined community' of the 'railway family' was formed but it will also attempt to consider the different layers of acceptance of the idea of the 'railway family', by whom and whether this changed over time.

Another aspect of Anderson's hypothesis which will be tested by this thesis is his theory that 'imagined communities' were created as a response to potential exclusion from more popular 'imagined communities'.⁸¹ Railway companies relied more heavily on the language of the 'railway family' in their magazines once they realised the growing threat from trade unions in the early 1900s. By curating their version of the 'railway family', the companies' were able to emphasise the benefits that railway workers and their families would continue to enjoy as long as they remained loyal to their employer rather than supporting the trade unions. This did work for a time; however, railway workers came to understand that loyalty could be subdivided

⁸⁰ O'Day, 'Imagined Irish Communities', p.416

⁸¹ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.110

as McKenna states, “loyalty to the needs of the company was challenged by loyalty to family, grade, union and eventually to social class”.⁸²

It is crucial to consider who was doing the ‘imagining’ for this community of railway workers and family members – it was not just a top-down phenomenon, whereby the idea of the ‘railway family’ was imposed upon railway workers and their families by railway companies and trade unions but one in which those within the idea of the ‘railway family’ were able to create their own community. Examples of the language they used or the way that they acted towards one another demonstrate this, as a letter from the Motive Power department at Holyhead featured in the London Midland and Scottish railway company magazine in 1928 revealed that the men in that department had “adopted” retired railwaymen and bought them a company magazine to read each week.⁸³ This exemplifies the “fraternal comradeship” that Anderson describes within his definition of an ‘imagined community’.⁸⁴ A further discussion of how the idea of the ‘railway family’ was understood by railway workers and their families will follow in the subsequent four chapters.

When one uses the term ‘railway family’ even today, it elicits a positive response from those who considered themselves members of the ‘railway family’ due to their own, or a relative’s, involvement in the railway industry.⁸⁵ Railway companies are still invoking, and evoking, the idea of the ‘railway family’ in their business practices, for example, Govia Thameslink Railway recorded a safety and security message by the ten-

⁸² McKenna, F., *The Railway Workers: 1840 – 1970* (Faber and Faber, London, 1980) p.30

⁸³ *London Midland and Scottish railway company magazine* (LMSM), 5, 4 (1928) p.144

⁸⁴ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p.7

⁸⁵ Many positive comments on the idea of the ‘railway family’ have arisen out of posters and papers presented at conferences. An important example of this was the feedback received after presenting a paper entitled ‘What is the ‘railway family’ and why is it important?’ at the National Railway Museum’s *Work, Rest and Play: Exploring the Extended Railway Family* conference, 19/09/2015

year-old daughter of an employee asking passengers to “Please help my mummy and daddy come home from work today safely.”⁸⁶ The joy of belonging to the ‘railway family’ is most eloquently put by R.H.N Hardy in his personal reminiscences on his life working in the railway industry: “I have been lucky to choose a way of life that I have loved. I have met hundreds, nay thousands of people in all grades and levels, who have enriched my life”.⁸⁷ The permanence of the idea of the ‘railway family’ is exactly what the railway companies and trade unions were hoping for. This longevity, and the evolution of the ‘railway family’ to its present state, indicates that the idea has become less strategic and more benign, utilised less in the service of demanding loyalty from workers in return for certain paternalistic benefits and more as a way to create a community spirit and a sense of belonging amongst a diverse workforce.

2.3 Collective Identities

“Identity is about belonging, about what you have in common with some people and what differentiates you from others. At its most basic it gives you a sense of personal location, the stable core to your individuality. But it is also about your social relationship, your complex involvement with others.”⁸⁸ Jeffrey Week’s definition of identity is key to understanding how and why the idea of the ‘railway family’ was so readily accepted by railwaymen and their families. Identity was rooted in class, community and kinship; who you were similar to and who you were different from.⁸⁹

⁸⁶ BBC news, ‘Girl, 10, records station security alert’, 10/05/2016 <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-36250538> [23/11/2016]

⁸⁷ Hardy, R.H.N, *Railways in the Blood* (Ian Allen Ltd, Shepperton, 1985) p.127

⁸⁸ Weeks, Jeffrey, ‘The value of difference’ in Rutherford, J. (ed.) *Identity, Community, Culture, Difference* (Lawrence and Wishart, London, 1990) p.88 in Bradley, Harriet, *Fractured Identities. Changing Patterns of Inequality* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1996) p.24

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.23

The idea of the 'railway family' incorporated all three sections: it was mostly comprised of working-class railwaymen and their families, who often lived in small occupational communities within larger towns and cities. Being part of the 'railway family' fed into an individual's identity and the collective identity of the railway community. However, the idea of the 'railway family' as part of an individual and a collective identity had to compete with existing identity strands such as family, religion, locality, leisure and gender.

As Richard Jenkins argues, "There is more to an organisation than its membership, and the same is true for any group or collectivity."⁹⁰ Identity can be shaped by social structures and also by the individual themselves, who can make the conscious choice to belong to certain groups or collective identities.⁹¹ Being part of the idea of the 'railway family', and making the deliberate choice to become part of this idea, became essential to the identity of individual railwaymen, their non-working family members and to their collective identity as part of the railway industry. Jenkins' arguments are particularly useful when discussing the idea of the 'railway family', as they highlight how the idea was constructed and absorbed internally by railwaymen and their families. According to Jenkins, collective identity emphasises how members are similar to one another and this in turn influences how members define themselves.⁹² The idea of the 'railway family' was created by railway companies and trade unions and was accepted and absorbed by railwaymen so that they came to

⁹⁰ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 3rd Edition, 2008, p.10

⁹¹ Woodward, Kath (ed.) *Questioning Identity: Gender, Class, Nation* (Routledge, London, 2000) p.1

⁹² Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 1st Edition, 1996, pp.80 – 88.

define themselves as part of the 'railway family'. This then helped railway companies and trade unions to maintain the idea.

Jenkins argues that, "The process of group identification encourages and is encouraged by class struggle."⁹³ Louis Althusser has also stated that ideologies such as the 'railway family' emerge "from social classes at grips in the class struggle: from their conditions of existence, their practices, their experience of the struggle, etc."⁹⁴ This is a particularly pertinent point when one considers the debates over the growth of trade unions and working-class consciousness. E.P. Thompson's influential work on the creation of the English working-class argues that class is a historical phenomenon, rather than a social structure or category and that it occurs when shared experiences allow people to identify with one another.⁹⁵ Therefore, "Class consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms: embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas and institutional forms."⁹⁶ Thus the whole idea of the 'railway family' allowed for the creation of a particular working class consciousness amongst railwaymen and their families. Whether this was intended, particularly by railway companies, is debatable. The trade union utilisation of the idea of the 'railway family' on the other hand is more compatible with this theory. Thompson calls trade unions and friendly societies a "unifying cultural influence" who encouraged mutuality and self-help. These latter concepts were prevalent within both the railway company and trade union idea of the 'railway family'.⁹⁷

⁹³ Ibid., p.88

⁹⁴ Althusser, Louis, *Lenin and Philosophy* (Monthly Review Press, New York, 1971) Translated from French by Ben Brewster, p.186

⁹⁵ Thompson, E.P, *The Making of the English Working Class* (Penguin Books, London, 1991) 3rd Edition, p.8

⁹⁶ Ibid., p.9

⁹⁷ Ibid., p.462

Railway trade unions focused on the idea of the 'railway family' as a unifying force for their members, and particularly member's wives, in the fight for better wages and working conditions for railwaymen. This was often at the expense of female railway workers. Despite having an auxiliary that encouraged women to become involved in union activity, *The Locomotive Journal* featured a number of letters and articles calling on all ASLEF railwaymen to remain strong in the face of pressure to accept women onto the locomotive footplate in order to protect railwaymen's jobs and wages.⁹⁸ One reason for this was that reinforcing their sex-based domination and the subordination of women was one of the few methods of control that working-class men were able to exert over the production of labour.⁹⁹ Preventing women from working in many railway occupations was seen as a by-product of this class struggle against employers; it was unfortunate but it was necessary if railwaymen were going to secure the advances in pay and benefits that they were fighting for.¹⁰⁰

Another reason for this exclusion was, as Rosa Matheson has argued, that female railway workers struggled to create a railway identity that was as strong as the one held by their male counterparts. The temporary nature of women's work, during war time or before marriage, played a large part in this as there was simply not enough time to develop a unified identity. There was also a "misguided belief" that women did not work on the railways before the First World War and therefore could not compete with the established identity of railwaymen, who had worked in the industry since its

⁹⁸ *Locomotive Journal*, 55, 8 (1942) p.165 and p.179

⁹⁹ Humphries, Jane, 'Class struggle and the persistence of the working-class family' *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 1, 3 (1977) p.253

¹⁰⁰ Cockburn, Cynthia, *Brothers. Male Dominance and Technological Change* (Pluto Press, London, 1983) p.151

earliest days.¹⁰¹ However small in number, women had worked on the railways before the First World War in limited roles. Yet they were unable to create the same kind of collective identity as railwaymen, either as workers or as women in the same industry. Emphasis on the temporary nature of women's work on the railways disadvantaged those women who decided to make it their career, in terms of the creation of their own workplace identity, their position within the 'railway family' and their pay, grade and training prospects.¹⁰²

Identity is socially recognised and symbols and symbolic displays can help in this definition.¹⁰³ Trade union and railway company insignia were worn together, demonstrating the dual loyalty that both railway companies and trade unions were able to engender.¹⁰⁴ The symbols of the railway industry, particularly company insignia and trade union badges, were worn by employees, trade union members, and those non-working family members who were in railway company or trade union approved societies. Such symbols, representing membership of the 'railway family', were ways that members of the community could be identified by other members and by outsiders. They also acted as a unifying agent ensuring that all railwaymen, from the highest to the lowest paid were identifiable to all without distinction of their grade or status.¹⁰⁵ Discussing the idea of the 'railway family' and wearing the symbols that represented it continued to perpetuate its symbolic value amongst members and outsiders.¹⁰⁶ Symbolic displays, such as trade union marches and banners, were ways

¹⁰¹ Matheson, *The Fair Sex*, p.10

¹⁰² Brown, Henry Phelps, *The Inequality of Pay* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977) p.157

¹⁰³ Woodward, *Questioning Identity*, p.7

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p.60

¹⁰⁵ Gilbert, 'Imagined communities and mining communities', p.51

¹⁰⁶ Jenkins, *Social Identity*, p.109

that the collective identity was displayed to those who were not members of the trade union, or within the idea of the 'railway family'.¹⁰⁷ Trade union songs and hymns were ways to demonstrate membership of the union and used a common language familiar to all members. This also excluded those outside the union from joining in with these songs and hymns because they did not know the correct words or music. For example, 'The Red Flag', a song written in 1889 by Jim Connell and inspired by the London Dock strike of that year, was for many years sung at Labour Party conferences. The song emphasises how powerful symbols could be stating, "It well recalls the triumphs past,/ It gives the hope of peace at last;/ The banner bright, the symbol plain,/ Of human right and human gain."¹⁰⁸

The wearing of a uniform was a necessity for many railway company employees and also delineated those who were classed as part of the idea of the 'railway family' and those who were not. Insignia such as badges and buttons were provided for those who did not wear a recognisable uniform, such as clerks and management, in order that they were defined as part of the 'railway family'. Not all female railway workers were given a uniform however, thus excluding them from the employee section of the railway community visibly and symbolically.¹⁰⁹ The NUR complained about this fact stating that, "There is no outward or visible sign that she is employed by the company at all. No uniform, no badge, no nothing, with the result that many people decline to recognise their right to make demands for tickets, which places these girls in a most invidious and unpleasant position."¹¹⁰ The union were keen that female workers were

¹⁰⁷ Ibid., p.145

¹⁰⁸ BBC news, 'Words of the Red Flag', 02/10/2003, http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/uk_politics/3157692.stm [20/03/2017]

¹⁰⁹ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p.6 and p.78

¹¹⁰ *The Railway Review*, 7/1/1916, p.3

recognisable as employees and the article claimed that a uniform ensured that women workers were seen to be doing the role that they were employed to do, rather than any tasks set for them by company management that undermined the strict hierarchical structure that secured railwaymen's jobs. The challenge for railway companies was how to include non-working family members into the idea of the 'railway family' when they did not wear a uniform or recognisable insignia; this was easier for the trade unions, whose women's auxiliaries wore badges and produced banners of their own. The railway companies had to rely on successful self-identification through family and participation in ceremonial and celebratory events.

2.4 The changing nature of family, kinship and community

Family has been defined by D. H. J. Morgan as "both societal and individual, both institutional and personal, both public and private".¹¹¹ The debate about the form and function of families has varied from historian to historian. It has been argued that the discussion on family, kin and community relationships in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has centred on a myth of a 'golden age' of family, focussing on male breadwinners and their economically dependent family members. During this 'golden age', the nuclear family was private and independent but lived close to kin.¹¹² It was from this that railway companies and trade unions drew their ideas of family, especially the ideal of a male breadwinner. Families did become smaller during this period for a number of reasons; focus on the male breadwinner model led to later

¹¹¹ Morgan, D.H.J., *The Family, Politics and Social Theory* (Routledge and Kegan and Paul, London, 1985) p.285 quoted in Finch, Janet, *Family Obligations and Social Change* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1989) p.4

¹¹² Davidoff, L., Doolittle, M., Fink, J. and Holden, K., *The Family Story: Blood, Contract and Intimacy, 1830 – 1960* (Longman, Essex, 1999) p.4

marriage and fewer children in order that pressure was not placed on a sole wage.¹¹³ Levine argues that the working-class was preoccupied with respectability, self-control and independence and having a smaller family was linked to these priorities.¹¹⁴ Diana Gittins has also argued that state legislation reinforced the idea of the private nuclear family with a male breadwinner – but not all families were, or could be like this.¹¹⁵ Although railway companies and trade unions strongly advocated for a version of the family which espoused the male breadwinner ideology, and many railwaymen also constructed their families around this notion, the ‘railway family’ expressed a wider remit. It was not just the household, or even extended family members, it also encompassed the local community.¹¹⁶ This ensured that the ‘railway family’ retained its links amongst those who no longer had a male breadwinner, especially their widows and orphans.

It is important to note that there is a section of historical literature that has not been referred to in this thesis. Negative aspects of family life such as domestic abuse or divorce, although crucial to developments within the family during this period have not been touched upon because the idea of the ‘railway family’ focused upon the positive effects that family and kin relationships could have on employers, trade unions and occupational communities. Jane Humphries makes an important point when discussing the persistence of the working-class family despite considerable class struggle in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: “family life has not been idealised

¹¹³ Levine, David, *Reproducing Families. The Political Economy of English Population History* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1987) p.176

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p.162

¹¹⁵ Gittins, Diana, *The Family in Question. Changing households and familiar ideologies* (Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1985) Second edition, 1993, p.154

¹¹⁶ Davin, Anna, *Growing Up Poor. Home, School and Street in London 1870 - 1914* (Rivers Oram Press, London, 1996) p.43

here; there has been recognition that patterns of dominance relating to age, sex and division of labour existed long before capitalism, and remain characteristic of family relations today. Their existence however, should not blind observers to the material benefits that the family imparts to the working-class in its struggle for a better life.”¹¹⁷ This thesis takes Humphries’ approach in recognising that the ‘railway family’ was far from ideal, and individual families within this wider community will have undoubtedly faced some of the negative effects of the paternal and patriarchal dominance that the ‘railway family’ was constructed around. However, it is outside of the scope of this thesis to discuss these effects in detail with relation to individual families.

One aspect of the ‘railway family’ that differentiated it from the views that railway companies and trade unions held about the nuclear family was the importance of kinship and community. According to David Levine, kinship and reciprocity was crucial to the working-class.¹¹⁸ These extended family members were able to connect people to the community, through their friends and neighbours.¹¹⁹ Kinship was particularly important for women because “the extended family was...the Women's trade union, the source of informal mutual aid for women and children and for men too where they were in need of support.”¹²⁰ Women relied on their family, friends and local community for the support that was not available to them through their work colleagues or fellow trade union members. The extent of kinship networks differed from family to family, however “the main indicators of kinship strength...are co-residence, deliberate propinquity, contact situations, and sentiment. Each is

¹¹⁷ Humphries, ‘Class struggle and the persistence of the working-class family’, p.257

¹¹⁸ Levine, *Reproducing Families*, p.200

¹¹⁹ Young, Michael and Wilmott, Peter, *Family and Kinship in East London* (Penguin Group, London, 1957) 2nd Edition, 1990, p.104

¹²⁰ *Ibid.*, p.X

inadequate taken alone but the overall effect is of considerable interest.”¹²¹ This argument will be examined in Chapter 6, which considers an occupational community in situ; kinship need not necessarily reflect family ties, as being part of the ‘railway family’ conferred a kinship status onto other members which was enhanced by daily interactions, residence within the same community and in many cases, a feeling of sentiment towards other ‘railway family’ members.

For railway workers and their families, transferring to different parts of the country was necessary for promotion. Migrants clustered together with those who had arrived from the same place and were already established in the town or city. These were not necessarily kin but were able to provide the newcomers with emotional security, jobs and housing.¹²² Occupational communities were also created by an influx of migrants who arrived to work in a particular industry. These communities can be defined by interactions both inside and outside of the workplace.¹²³ Revill argues that occupational communities need not carry any feelings of sentiment between members; however the idea of the ‘railway family’ encouraged these feelings.¹²⁴ Neighbours, friends, colleagues, lodgers and those born in the same area were a viable alternative to kinship networks.¹²⁵ Humphries argues that these relationships “assume fictive kin status” and encouraged a similar reciprocity that emerged amongst family members.¹²⁶ Railway workers often had to lodge with others as their work dictated. These lodgers

¹²¹ Anderson, *Family Structure in Nineteenth Century Lancashire* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1971) p.43

¹²² Ibid., p.101

¹²³ Revill, George, ‘Railway Derby’: occupational community, paternalism and corporate culture 1850 - 90’, *Urban History*, 28, 3 (2001) p.380

¹²⁴ Ibid., p.380

¹²⁵ Anderson, *Family Structure*, p.99

¹²⁶ Humphries, ‘Class struggle and the persistence of the working-class family’, p.249

also became part of the extended family within a household.¹²⁷ Lodgers preferred to live with a family or a widow – lodging houses were not considered respectable enough for railwaymen to frequent.¹²⁸

Within the family, it has been argued that railway employment followed a linear familial pattern – sons followed fathers into work in the railway industry. Although trade unions advocated and encouraged this pattern, economic variety helped maintain economic stability and families were careful not to rely too heavily on one industry alone.¹²⁹ By encouraging some of one's family into the same industry a "patriarchal craft culture" could be maintained.¹³⁰ Family, kinship and community were an important facet in the construction of an individual's identity and it was in this respect that the idea of the 'railway family' was understood and internalised by railwaymen, their wives and children. It was also through the medium of kinship and community that the 'railway family' was practised in everyday life within occupational communities.

2.5 The language of the 'railway family'

Newspapers and magazines are a key source for this thesis, and the language that was used to define the idea of the 'railway family' and ensure that it was inclusive to all railwaymen and their non-working family members is particularly important. As John Tosh has stated, the press – newspapers, magazines and other literature – are amongst the most important sources for historians. Their value comes from the fact

¹²⁷ Davin, *Growing Up Poor*, p.40

¹²⁸ Anderson, *Family Structure*, p.47

¹²⁹ Ibid., p.92

¹³⁰ Cockburn, *Brothers*, p.3

that they record social and political views, provide a day-to-day record of events, and in-depth reporting on certain issues.¹³¹ Newspapers and magazines provided topics for discussion both in public and private and the language they used was key to stimulating this discussion in both positive and negative lights.¹³² Tim Holmes has argued that “A magazine will always target a precisely defined group of readers and will base its content on the needs, desires, hopes and fears of that defined group, thus creating a bond of trust with their readerships. Using that bond, a magazine will encourage community-like interactions between itself and its readers, and among readers.”¹³³ This succinctly summarises why magazines and newspapers are so important to this study: railway company magazines and trade union newspapers were able to target men, women and children in order to draw them into the idea of the ‘railway family’ outside of the workplace.

Language was very important in creating the idea of the ‘railway family’. Martin Conboy has discussed the “Language of the News” in his book of the same title. He argues that “language is a profoundly social activity” and the success of news media is as a result of the way that it has been able to integrate itself within “the social aspects of language.”¹³⁴ The language of the ‘railway family’ was crafted such that it was all-encompassing, drawing railwaymen and their non-working family members into a wide social circle. It used terminology that all those involved in the railway industry would understand and recognise. Although this language was created and defined by those who edited the railway company newspapers and magazines, it reflected the

¹³¹ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p.33

¹³² Bingham, Adrian, ‘Reading Newspapers: Cultural Histories of the Popular Press in Modern Britain’, *History Compass*, 10, 2 (2012) p.142

¹³³ Holmes, Tim, ‘Mapping the Magazine’, *Journalism Studies*, 8, 4 (2007) p.514

¹³⁴ Conboy, Martin, *The Language of News* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2007) p.2

ideas and aspirations of the readership, particularly in relation to railwaymen's notions about traditional gender roles, most especially towards their own wives and daughters.¹³⁵

There are significant differences between the daily press and railway company magazines and trade union newspapers, with the latter both focused on a much narrower audience. This is not to say however, that those outside the railway industry did not read the newspapers and magazines as they were also available to buy from newsstands within railway stations. The daily press had a much wider audience to cater for in terms of numbers, social diversity and political agendas. This in turn meant that it was easier for railway companies and trade unions to ensure that their magazines and newspapers were personalised towards their target primary audience.

The language of the popular daily press shared similarities with the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers but also significant differences. During the 1920s, the popular press often focused on women as citizen-consumers, with rights to vote and spend money as they saw fit. It was during this decade that a modern version of the idealised housewife came into being; new labour-saving devices, smaller families and the ability to enjoy a wider range of hobbies and interests contributed towards this idea.¹³⁶ Railway company magazines and trade union newspapers also used the idea of the 'respectable' housewife in their discussion on the role of women within the idea of the 'railway family'. In the 1930s, Bingham has argued that politically left-leaning newspapers, especially *The Mirror*, created a new language for young working-class men and women which focused on the non-unionised and

¹³⁵ Ibid., p.12

¹³⁶ Bingham, Adrian, 'An Organ of Uplift', *Journalism Studies*, 14, 5 (2013) p.653

concentrated on discussing politics as if readers were conversing in the pub. This language echoed the debates which would have inevitably followed the subject under discussion.¹³⁷ Trade unions equally worked hard to ensure that all railwaymen were able to hold a discussion about labour politics and trade unionism in any situation, particularly with those who were not yet unionised.

Adrian Bingham has argued that there is a great deal of work still to be done in relation to studies of the popular press and particularly their intersection with more specialised newspapers, such as the railway company magazines and trade union press.¹³⁸ Within the scope of this thesis, there has not been the opportunity to explore these differences as fully as Bingham desires. This study considers the idea of the 'railway family' from the perspective of the railway press alone because a comparative study would have been a major undertaking that was outside the limits of this thesis. Teresa Gerrard has examined new methods for studying reading habits and practices and states that, "the more a so-called group of 'common readers' is defined for further study, the more they and their reading experience become an exception."¹³⁹ Whilst this may be the case in studies of the popular press, by narrowing the field of study in this instance it is possible to focus on how the idea of the 'railway family' was managed and maintained within the railway community, using railway company magazines and trade union newspapers as its base. When one considers the 'railway family' through the lens of the railway press, they no longer become an exception.

¹³⁷ Ibid., pp.658 - 660

¹³⁸ Bingham, 'Reading Newspapers', p.143

¹³⁹ Gerrard, Teresa, 'New methods in the History of Reading: "Answers to Correspondents" in *The Family Herald, 1860 – 1900*' in Towheed, Shafquat; Crone, Rosalind and Halsey, Katie (eds.) *The History of Reading* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2011) p.380

Tony Grace has argued that the purpose of the trade union press was to inform members about what was happening within the union and where appropriate, what was happening in the wider world outside of the union.¹⁴⁰ This was very similar to the purpose of railway company magazines that, alongside trade union newspapers, related much of their content towards the 'railway family'. Trade union newspapers and railway company magazines were also designed to ensure all members were aware of the purpose and function of the company or union including the services it provided to railwaymen and their families, for example death benefit, insurance against sickness and unemployment and leisure facilities. This was in the interests of the 'railway family', but also for the railway companies and trade unions who wanted more railwaymen to subscribe to these funds. By doing so, railwaymen and their families were coming under the paternalistic protection of their employers and also assenting to the self-help ideology that both railway companies and trade unions endorsed.

The language of the 'railway family' was paternalistic in its tone throughout much of the period and this was communicated clearly within the company magazines. A prime example is an open letter from the Chairman of the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company to his employees stating that "Our great machine needs to be of the best physical and human material in every part, and to be lubricated with goodwill and a sense of corporate interdependence."¹⁴¹ The Chairman was calling on his employees to fulfil their obligations to the company during tough times as the company had done for them and, in essence, work together under the banner of the

¹⁴⁰ Grace, Tony, 'The trade union press in Britain', *Media Culture Society*, 7, 2 (1985) p.249

¹⁴¹ LMSM, 9, 1 (1932) p.3

'railway family'. One reason for this paternalistic language was that the idea of the 'railway family' was created by railway companies in response to the threat of trade unionism. The idea of the 'railway family' reflected the paternalistic attitude of railway company management, guiding and disciplining their 'children', whilst also encouraging railwaymen to help themselves and each other in a narrowly occupational way rather than the class-based welfare which trade unions encouraged. This class-based welfare was embodied in the values of self-help that trade unions nurtured. The industrial welfare practices that many railway companies were using to replace their paternalistic practices also employed these self-help techniques. An excellent example of this is the series of articles that appeared in the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company magazine documenting their industrial welfare plans: "Welfare seeks to humanise industry; to create esprit de corps; and thus secure a happy and more efficient staff. I believe Welfare work to be of benefit to employer and employed alike..."¹⁴²

Conboy argues that language was particularly important in creating and defining ideologies such as the 'railway family': "Ideology is the process by which belief systems become established as common sense, habitual patterns. The constant use of familiar references in daily communication such as within the language of our news media can be seen to reinforce dominant patterns of belief in society, and this has implications for the power structure of that society."¹⁴³ By utilising the idea of the 'railway family' within their newspapers and magazines, and reinforcing it through common language, cartoons and photographs, the railway companies and trade unions

¹⁴² LMSM, 1, 1 (1923) p.5

¹⁴³ Conboy, *The Language of News*, p.96

were establishing the idea of the 'railway family' within the complex hierarchy of the railway industry. Even casual readers of railway company magazines and trade union newspapers were able to absorb some of the content and language surrounding the idea of the 'railway family' and the implied 'common sense' of industry loyalty.¹⁴⁴ One example of a group of readers with very little time to read the whole of the newspaper or magazine was the wives of railwaymen, who became an important target audience for certain sections.¹⁴⁵ Therefore, it was crucial that the idea of the 'railway family' was conveyed in a way that was easy to understand and clear in the limited space that women were afforded within the newspapers and magazines – the women's page.

Alongside examining the language of the 'railway family' within trade union newspapers and railway company magazines, this thesis will focus on the women's pages of these magazines and newspapers in order to understand how the female family members of railwaymen were targeted and drawn into the 'railway family'. Some of these women worked and were able to become integrated into the 'railway family' through the company and trade union, whilst those who did not work had to be targeted through the magazines and newspapers.

However, just because the railway companies and trade unions had preferred meanings for the language they used within their newspapers and magazines, does not mean that they were read that way by railwaymen and their families.¹⁴⁶ The system of encoding and decoding messages is dependent on both the producers of the message and the consumers of that message understanding the same meaning structures.

¹⁴⁴ Bingham, Adrian, 'Ignoring the First Draft of History', *Media History*, 18, 3-4 (2012) p.315

¹⁴⁵ Langhamer, Claire, *Women's leisure in England 1920-60* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2000) p.170

¹⁴⁶ Hall, Stuart, 'Encoding/Decoding' in Marris, Paul and Thornham, Sue (ed.) *Media Studies: A Reader (Second Edition)* (Edinburgh University Press, Edinburgh, 1999) p.58

Figure 1, adapted from a diagram in Stuart Hall's work demonstrates how the message of the 'railway family' was conveyed by railway companies and trade unions and how it was understood by railwaymen and their families.

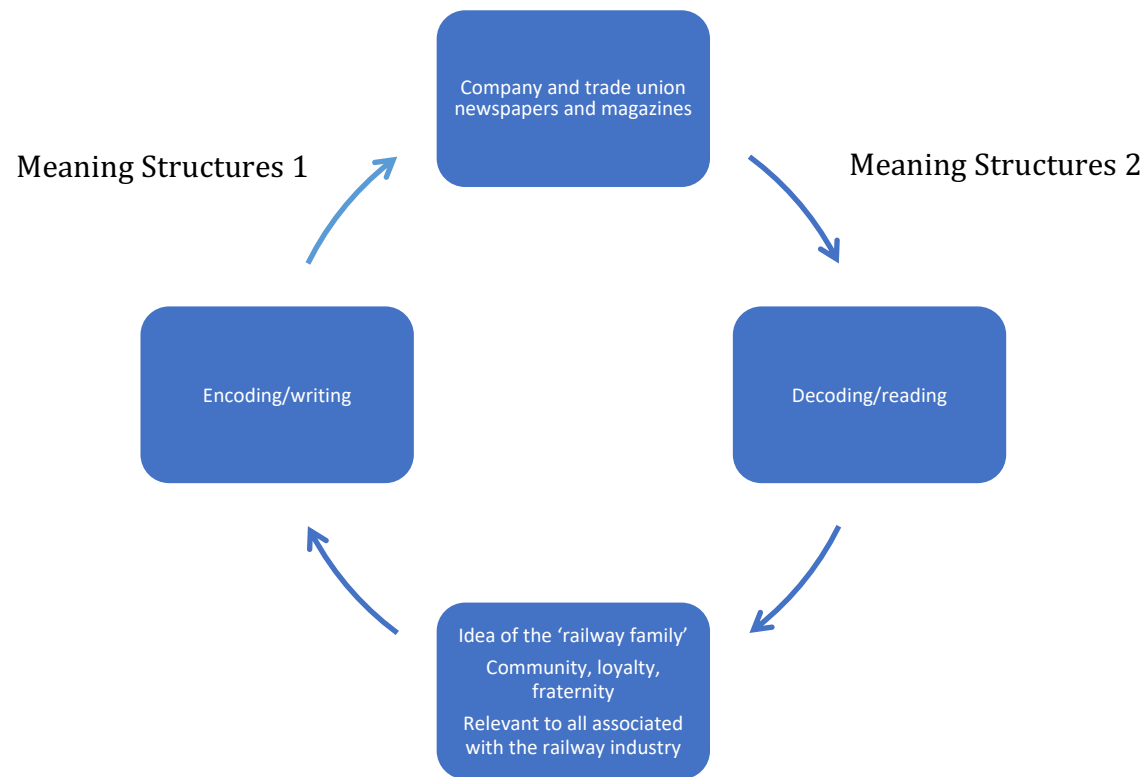


Figure 1. Diagram, adapted from Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding' p.54, which shows how, ideally, meaning structures 1 and 2 must be similar in order to be decoded with the same meanings that the producers of the message intended.

For railway companies and trade unions, the meaning of messages that they were attempting to convey concerning the idea of the 'railway family' were relatively simple and easy to comprehend. Family, kinship and community was experienced on a day-to-day basis by railwaymen and their families. As Figure 1 demonstrates, these meanings were also ideally circular and self-sustaining; as the writers and editors came to recognise how railwaymen and their families understood the idea of the 'railway family' through letters pages, articles and face to face interactions at events the newspapers and magazines covered, they were able to adapt the messages they were trying to convey. In a similar manner, as the idea of the 'railway family' gained traction with railway companies and trade unions, railwaymen and their families were better able to understand how the companies and unions intended to deploy the idea of the 'railway family' and how these institutions understood the idea. Therefore, it was difficult for the idea of the 'railway family' to become misunderstood or contested. Identification with the ideas that the magazines and newspapers were attempting to convey was crucial if these meanings were to be decoded appropriately. This was true of both the idea of the 'railway family' and of the content of the women's pages within the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers.¹⁴⁷ It is vital to remember that "people are not blank slates...[they have] prior opinions, views, and ideas of themselves" which affected the way that they identified with the idea of the 'railway family' and thus engaged with the language.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁷ Beetham, Margaret, *A Magazine of her own? Domesticity and desire in the woman's magazine, 1800 – 1914* (Routledge, London, 1996) p.194

¹⁴⁸ Eldridge, John; Kitinger, Jenny and Williams, Kevin, *The Mass Media and Power in Modern Britain* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1997) p.130

Adrian Bingham's work has focused on the popular press in the first half of the twentieth century. In particular, he considers how newspapers reflect notions of gender identity through the language and photographs they chose to use. This is particularly pertinent for this study and for the discussion of women's pages that follows. Bingham argues that much of the literature on print media asserts the view that the 'traditional' gender boundaries of domesticity, marriage and motherhood were reaffirmed after the First World War. However, he notes that this was not necessarily the case, as "femininity and masculinity are complex and fragmented identities, shaped by a multitude of different influences."¹⁴⁹ This thesis will argue that both railway company magazines and trade union newspapers pursued narratives of traditional gender roles and used language that reinforced these ideas. In this context, women workers were problematic to the idea of the 'railway family' and their representation within railway company magazines and trade union newspapers was similarly contradictory and minimised. By reinforcing gender roles, railway companies and trade unions were seeking to ensure that the idea of the 'railway family' was non-threatening to the majority of their workers or members (who were predominantly male) and consequently would be more readily accepted. In very limited and exceptional circumstances, voices of dissent were raised regarding the role of women in the workforce and in society more generally. On the whole however, these were uncommon and appeared more as a placatory measure than as a way in which women were able to challenge the established gender norms.

¹⁴⁹ Bingham, Adrian, *Gender, Modernity, and the Popular Press in Inter-War Britain* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004) pp.6 - 7

The language of the women's page focused on the idea of housewifery as a profession as, "the implicit assumption of much of the women's page material was that most women would eventually leave the world of work to marry and raise a family."¹⁵⁰ This concurs with Rosa Matheson's argument that female railway workers struggled to create their own railway identity because of the temporary nature of their work as discussed in Section 2.3 above. The idea of the 'railway family' played on this fact, encouraging women to become involved in the railway industry as wives and mothers rather than as workers. The women's pages were also edited by women and discussed ideas and issues that were familiar to all women, thus "The women's pages deliberately sought to construct a female network that the reader could turn to as a supplement to her actual friendship group."¹⁵¹ Women were drawn further into the idea of the 'railway family' through these pages and an 'imagined community' of the wives and daughters of railwaymen was created as a sub-section of the wider 'imagined community' of the railway industry.

As Bingham argues, "although daily newspapers had a significant influence on contemporary attitudes, the press was in no position to impose 'patriarchy' and 'domesticity' on an unwilling female population."¹⁵² Similarly, railway company magazines and trade union newspapers were unable to force the idea of the 'railway family' or the traditional gender boundaries that they espoused on their women's pages upon those who read them, despite being relatively influential within the railway community. Notwithstanding the seemingly widespread acceptance of the idea of the

¹⁵⁰Ibid., p.67

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.87

¹⁵² Ibid., p.246

‘railway family’, and the small numbers of women workers who were able to retain jobs within the railway industry, it is challenging to gauge how successful it was within a railwayman’s home. The minutebooks of the Railway Women’s Guild are one way to uncover some of the perceptions and beliefs associated with the ‘railway family’ that the wives and daughters of railwaymen held. The effectiveness of many of the ideas propounded within railway company magazines and trade union newspapers will be explored through these minutebooks in Chapter 6.

The language of family, kinship and community has been used in other industrial contexts. For example, in his discussion of class in England between 1848 and 1914, Patrick Joyce examines the use of the language of family by cotton trade unions in Lancashire and Yorkshire in the mid-nineteenth century. Joyce argues that using the metaphor of family did not imply either the domination of men over women or conflict between the genders, but rather was a way that the differing interests of men and women could be united under a common theme.¹⁵³ The unifying theme of family, and “family values”, was reproduced in the factory journals and as Joyce argues, “Through these means, even if only partly and from the point of view of male unionists, women were brought within the remit of the union discourse. The idea of the family was a central element in the broader idea of the factory community.”¹⁵⁴ In a similar vein to Joyce’s arguments regarding factory unions, the concept of drawing women into a male-dominated space in a way that was not challenging to male unionists or male workers was a technique employed by railway companies and railway trade unions

¹⁵³ Joyce, Patrick, *Visions of the People. Industrial England and the question of class 1848 – 1914* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991) p.125

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p.135 - 136

through the use of the idea of the 'railway family'. This demonstrates that railway companies were not the first, or only, paternalistic institutions to utilise the idea of 'family' to bond their workers together and to the company. Railway trade unions too were not the first male-dominated unions to employ these practices in order to mitigate the threat of women to their members.

It is clear that railway companies and trade unions had their own agendas when it came to utilising the idea of the 'railway family'. With regard to Bingham's argument concerning daily newspapers, "The final product [railway company magazines and trade union newspapers] was the outcome of a complex series of decisions which balanced what proprietors, editors, journalists, and outside contributors wanted to produce, what they assumed the target audience wanted to read, and what was (perceived to be) required for commercial and financial success (namely, securing advertising contracts and maximising circulation)."¹⁵⁵ The response of the readership is also key to understanding how the idea of the 'railway family' worked in practice but it is notoriously difficult to gauge. This is the challenge when writing about publications, whether specific trade press or more general daily newspapers. Readers did not often document their thoughts on the items they read so there are few, if any, sources that reflect on how the audience of railwaymen and their families understood what they were reading and whether they accepted or challenged these notions. It is here that the Letters Pages of the company magazines and trade union newspapers can provide a crucial insight into the thoughts and opinions of railway workers and their family members albeit through letters selected by the editors of the newspapers and

¹⁵⁵ Bingham, Gender, *Modernity and the Popular Press*, p.11

magazines. If the language of the 'railway family' was one that was to be adopted and internalised by railwaymen and their families, it needed to be accessible, relatable and have a solid link to the world in which railwaymen and their families lived.

2.6 Methodology

This study addresses a number of questions concerning the idea of the 'railway family' including: who was involved in the development of the idea, how was it maintained and extended throughout the period and why was the concept so important to all those involved? This thesis considers the idea of the 'railway family' to encompass all those who worked in the railway industry and their non-working family members within an 'imagined community'. Whilst this idea is not often explicitly referenced in the archival sources that this study has focused upon, it will demonstrate how railway companies, trade unions and railwaymen and their non-working family members used it in a variety of ways. There is a particular focus on ensuring that the role of women as workers, wives and members of trade unions and trade union auxiliaries is given adequate consideration, since these perspectives are so lacking within other historical studies of the railway industry. However, as Tosh argues in his work on the aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history, a view of the past that seeks to raise consciousness can romanticise history by emphasising heroism in adversity.¹⁵⁶ The struggles that women connected to the railway industry faced will be addressed within this study in the context of the idea of the 'railway family'; it will also examine their successes as well as their failures or difficulties.

¹⁵⁶ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p.17

The sources that this thesis will focus on most significantly are railway company magazines, trade union newspapers and the minutebooks of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester. There are a number of reasons why these sources were chosen; one particularly important reason is their availability. The railway company magazines are an important archival resource held at the National Railway Museum. They have been used as a source to explore business and institutional history and technical studies, but they are yet to be studied from the perspective of the idea of the 'railway family'.¹⁵⁷ The trade union newspapers have also been treated in a similar manner; this thesis utilises *The Railway Review*, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS)/National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) newspaper and *The Railway Clerk/The Railway Service Journal*, the Railway Clerks Association (RCA) newspaper, both held at the Modern Records Centre at Warwick University. It also draws on the *Locomotive Journal*, the newspaper of the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) which is held at the British Library at Boston Spa.

Finally, the minutebooks of the Railway Women's Guild Gloucester branch, held at Gloucestershire Archives, are the most complete set of sources regarding a branch of the Guild that are available to study. They contain references to members, the business of meetings and the social and welfare aspects of the Guild. The Gloucester minutebooks have extensive records for 1911 to 1947 and then contain patchy coverage until 1966. These have been supplemented with letters and minutes of the Executive Committee, from 1900 to 1910 and the records of the Perth Railway Women's Guild, from 1944 to 1948. The selection of these sources has been dictated

¹⁵⁷ For example, Esbester, Michael, 'Dead on the point of "safety": occupational safety education on the Great Western Railway c.1913-39' (Unpublished PhD thesis, University of York, 2006)

by their availability, but it is a representative selection with, what Tosh suggests, are “contrary and supporting indicators”.¹⁵⁸

By bringing these sources together in one study it is possible to gain a greater understanding of how the idea of the ‘railway family’ worked in theory and in practice, whilst also enhancing the understanding and interpretation of the National Railway Museum’s collections concerning women and the railway industry as well as the idea of the ‘railway family’. As this project is funded collaboratively with the National Railway Museum, it is important to create a body of work that enhances the knowledge and deployment of the sources and collections held there and the ways that they can be used by other researchers to gain a greater understanding of the social history of the railway industry.

There is a significant gap in the literature concerning women within the railway industry and the labour movement. As discussed in the introduction, by focusing on women’s trade union auxiliaries this thesis will add a substantial new dimension to the current historiographical debate about the role of women within the labour movement. Therefore, these auxiliaries have been examined in as much detail as possible in order to understand their composition and their motivations. The most significant challenge faced when using railway company magazines and trade union newspapers, along with other newspapers and periodicals, is that it is difficult to uncover the decision-making process behind the selection of articles, photographs and the tone these magazines and newspapers took on certain issues. The archive of meeting notes and minutes for the production of these newspapers and magazines was often deemed ephemeral and

¹⁵⁸ Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, p.131

therefore did not survive the transitions between different companies, amalgamations and other developments. Biographies and autobiographies of some of the Editors of these newspapers and magazines, often high-ranking railway company or trade union officials, have been published and can provide some useful snippets into the working life of these institutions.

Railway company magazines are an important source for this thesis and a variety of railway company magazines were selected to represent the different companies that were in existence throughout the period. Chapter 3 will focus on railway companies and the idea of the 'railway family', and the railway companies will be discussed in further detail. The railway company magazines that were selected for this study were chosen to cover the whole period from 1900 to 1948 and reflect the relative size of railway companies. For example, the Great Central Railway Company produced a magazine from 1905 to 1918 whilst the Great Western Railway Company, one of the largest railway companies in Britain during this period supported a company magazine from 1888 to 1948. Some of these magazines span only a short amount of time whilst others cover the whole period. Figure 2 depicts the date span of the company magazines utilised for this thesis. All those magazines that had women's pages (the London Midland and Scottish railway company magazine, the Great Eastern railway company magazine and the London North Western railway company magazine) were surveyed alongside a number of railway company magazines that did not have this provision for women workers or railwaymen's wives; the ways that railway companies drew women into the idea of the 'railway family' will be compared via these women's pages and through the content directed towards female readers in other sections of the magazines.

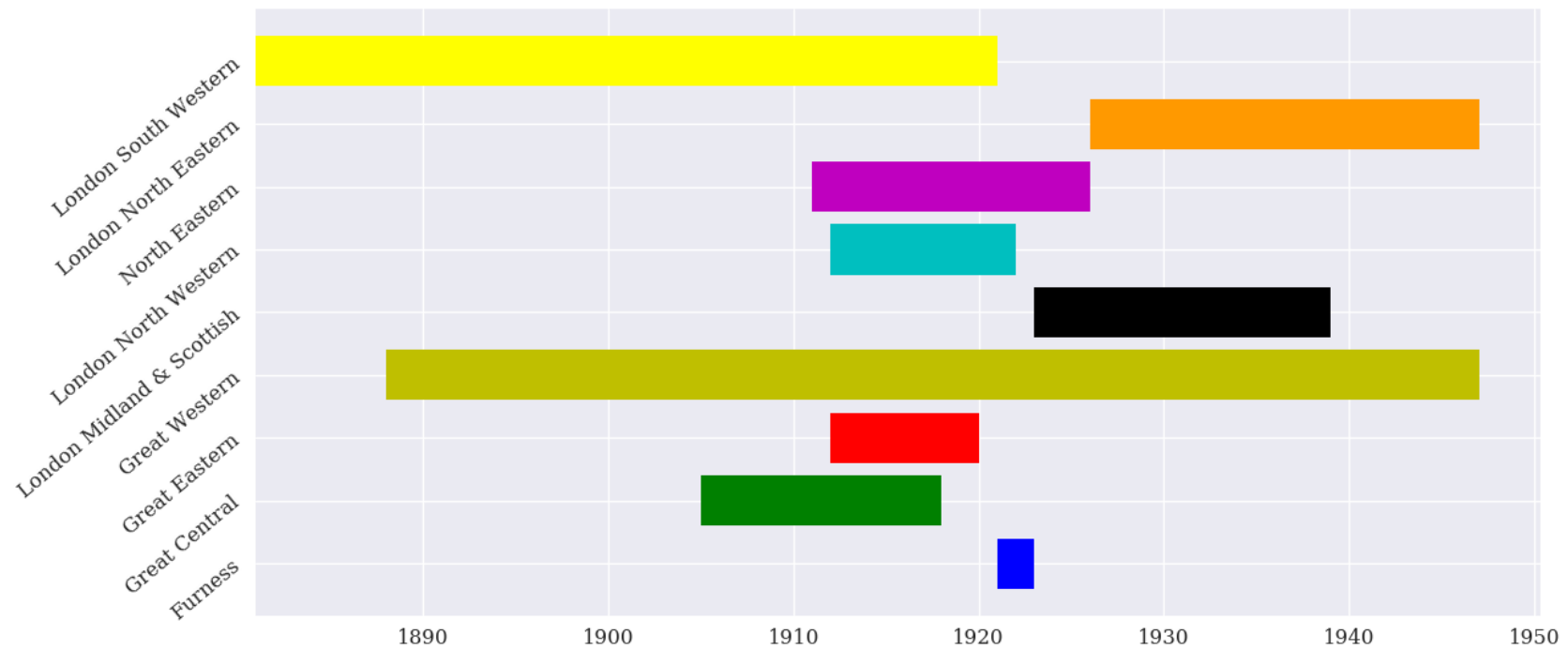


Figure 2. Publication dates for the major Railway Company magazines.

Trade union newspapers are also a vital resource for Chapter 4, a discussion of trade unions and the idea of the 'railway family'. The three largest railway trade unions have been considered and both the NUR newspaper, *The Railway Review* and the ASLEF newspaper, the *Locomotive Journal* have been studied throughout their existence within the period – both from 1900 to 1948. The RCA newspaper, *The Railway Clerk* (*The Railway Service Journal* from 1919) was surveyed from its inception in 1904 to 1948 with a gap between 1904 and 1908 due to the fact that the Modern Records Centre do not have copies of these issues. A sampling technique was used, whereby an alternate year from 1900 to 1948 was analysed in order to ensure that enough time could be devoted to each trade union. It is important to note that there were a number of particularly influential years for trade unions that fell outside of this pattern that were also studied including the two World Wars, 1911 and 1919, the years of two major railway strikes. These three unions used the idea of the 'railway family' in different ways and by surveying all three newspapers it is possible to compare how the idea was deployed.

As O'Malley has argued, it is crucial to consider the provenance of print media and the wider role of publications during any given period.¹⁵⁹ If the articles, letters and features within the magazines and newspapers use the language of the 'railway family', it has been assumed that this was a deliberate choice. This is not just limited to the term 'railway family' however and includes any terms or language which reflect this relationship. O'Malley also cautions against using print media to conclude that the opinions promulgated within the newspapers and magazines reflect the opinions of

¹⁵⁹ O'Malley, Tom, 'History, Historians and the writing of print and newspaper history in the UK c.1945 – 1962', *Media History*, 18, 3-4 (2012) p.294

the readership as a whole.¹⁶⁰ This thesis acknowledges that the magazines and newspapers were carefully curated by their Editors to reflect the ideas of company and trade union management – the idea of the ‘railway family’ was a part of this curation. The idea of the ‘railway family’ as depicted in the railway press was overwhelmingly positive. Not every railwayman, their family members or the management of railway companies and trade unions would have bought into the idea of the ‘railway family’ but the evidence discussed in the following four chapters suggest that a large number did do so. Without contrary sources, it is difficult to contest these positive notions, so this thesis examines areas where railwaymen and their families were able to challenge the institutions of the railway companies and trade unions through the idea of the ‘railway family’ and how they created their own occupational community in the towns and cities in which they lived.

Similarly, circulation figures do not give us the full picture as to who read the magazine and whether they were supportive of its content and ideas.¹⁶¹ Railway company magazines and trade union newspapers were often read by different family members, hence the columns and cartoon strips that were aimed at women and children. There was also encouragement to share the newspapers and magazines with friends and neighbours.¹⁶² As O’Malley has argued, the press is a “complex set of relations” and needs to be considered and understood as such.¹⁶³ The lack of sources that can help us understand editorial choices and reader responses to the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers presents some difficulties for this

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., p.294

¹⁶¹ Ibid., p.301

¹⁶² Heller, Michael, “British Company Magazines, 1878 – 1939: The Origins and Functions of house journals in large-scale organisations” *Media History*, 15, 2 (2009) p. 148

¹⁶³ Ibid., p.302

study. An attempt has been made to overcome this by using different types of sources, including minutebooks, personal papers, autobiographies and biographies that cover the whole period.

The case study of Gloucester, found in Chapter 6, was developed because it allows for a demonstration of the idea of the 'railway family' in practice. Gloucester was chosen because of the nature and number of sources available for the city, particularly those of the Railway Women's Guild, which cannot be found for any other area of the country. Kathryn Gleadle has stated that focusing on particular archive sources in depth can be particularly profitable for the study of women's history.¹⁶⁴ It allows the role of women to be fully examined through the sources and a reimagining of the part played by women within the railway industry as active participants throughout this period is a key aim of this thesis.

Also, due to the fact that Gloucester was a centre of railway competition between two railway companies, trade union branches and the companies and the unions, a case study offers a fruitful examination into the ways that the idea of the 'railway family' was utilised by the different institutions and how receptive railwaymen and their families were to the idea when there were other allegiances open to them. The creation of an occupational community can be purely functional or, as George Revill has argued in the case of Derby, "a matter of choice in which social interaction between fellow workers and their families is based on affective ties to the workplace, a sense of company loyalty and some form of communal sentiment."¹⁶⁵ This

¹⁶⁴ Gleadle, Kathryn, 'The Imagined Communities of Women's History: current debates and emerging themes, a rhizomatic approach', *Women's History Review*, 22, 4 (2013) p.530

¹⁶⁵ Revill, George, 'Migration, mobility and community: Midland Railway headquarters and the railway suburb of Derby 1850 – 1890' in Divall, Colin, (ed.) *Railway, place and identity* (The Institute of Railway Studies, York, 1997) p.1

study will demonstrate that Gloucester was a suitable choice for validating this argument particularly because the town was not built solely to house railway workshops and employees as 'railway towns' such as Swindon and Crewe were – the town existed well before the railway arrived and therefore the creation of an occupational community was a choice made by railway workers.¹⁶⁶

As Burke has argued in *History and Social Theory*, it is possible to draw larger and more general conclusions from local data sources but it is also important to remember that, "It cannot be assumed that a community is homogenous in attitudes or free from conflicts".¹⁶⁷ The idea of the 'railway family' is applied broadly across the railway community in Gloucester for the purpose of the case study, but not every railway company or trade union used the idea in the same way, and not every railwayman or their family members reacted and responded to the idea of the 'railway family' similarly. However, the wider implications of the idea of the 'railway family' can be understood by considering the microcosm of Gloucester.

Alongside the minutebooks of the Railway Women's Guild, sources utilised for this case study include the 1911 Census, local newspapers, rate books, Medical Officer of Health reports and trade union records. The census records and local newspapers including the *Gloucester Citizen*, *Gloucester Journal* and *Gloucestershire Chronicle* were accessed online from the British Newspaper Archive at www.findmypast.com. There have been some concerns over copyright when digitising twentieth century newspapers, however the *Gloucester Citizen*, *Gloucester Journal* and *Gloucestershire*

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., p.1

¹⁶⁷ Burke, *History and Social Theory*, p.60

Chronicle have very full and detailed runs accessible online.¹⁶⁸ Care has been taken to ensure that any article about the railway companies, trade unions or Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester, found via keyword search, was read within the context of the issue.¹⁶⁹ These digital newspapers also include photographs, thus avoiding the limiting of "interpretive possibilities" as discussed in Nicole Maurantonio's article on the use of digitised newspaper collections that have had photographs removed.¹⁷⁰ News images work differently to purely textual equivalents due to photographs, as "Both historians and photographers 'frame' their subjects; they determine what or whom is worthy of attention as well as what or whom is excluded from the field of vision."¹⁷¹ Images will be used sporadically throughout this thesis in order to illustrate a point that is being made about the use of the idea of the 'railway family' by railway companies or trade unions, or how it was lived in practice by railway workers and their families.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the theory behind the idea of the 'railway family', a model which, when applied to railway companies, trade unions and railway employees and their families, can help us come to an understanding of how relations worked between these three groups. The theory behind the idea of the 'railway family' focuses on Benedict Anderson's work on 'imagined communities' and those historians who have engaged with his work. This thesis is a refinement of his theory, applied in a non-Nationalist context. Instead it draws on ideas of family and kinship, identity and

¹⁶⁸ Nicholson, Bob, 'The Digital Turn', *Media History*, 19, 1 (2013) p.60

¹⁶⁹ Ibid., p.61

¹⁷⁰ Maurantonio, Nicole, 'Archiving the Visual', *Media History*, 20, 1 (2014) p.90

¹⁷¹ Ibid., p.91

language to argue that the idea of the 'railway family' was created, maintained and extended by railway companies and trade unions and was internalised and lived in practice by railwaymen and their non-working family members. The following chapters will investigate how the idea of the 'railway family' was established and deployed by railway companies, trade unions and railwaymen and how it came to be such an important concept for all those involved.

In order to do this, railway company magazines, trade union newspapers and the minutebooks of the Railway Women's Guild will be studied in detail to understand the idea of the 'railway family' from a multiplicity of perspectives. It was the basis of an 'imagined' railway community, with its own collective identity and shared language. This language in particular runs throughout the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers which will be examined in this thesis and it acted as both an inclusive and an exclusive force. The reasons why it was so important to railway companies, trade unions and the railwaymen themselves will be discussed in the following chapters. However, the idea of the 'railway family' still holds a powerful sway over those connected to the railway industry even today.

Chapter 3. RAILWAY COMPANIES AND THE IDEA OF THE 'RAILWAY FAMILY' IN PRINT MEDIA

The idea of the 'railway family' as envisaged by railway companies was designed to bind railwaymen and their non-working family members to a particular company and inspire loyalty, hard work and support from all those concerned. One of the most important ways that the idea was disseminated by railway companies was through their company magazines. A number of railway companies had a company magazine before the First World War and the main four railway companies all had one from 1923.

Michael Heller has written a number of articles on the role of Company magazines across British industry. He claims that the First World War was a turning point for many Company magazines – they became more corporate, aimed at a wider section of the workforce and focused on the education and entertainment of workers as well as spreading information about the Company and its activities to workers in all areas of the country and in some cases even around the world.¹⁷² An example of this is the British American Tobacco (BAT) Company Bulletin which was originally created by staff during the First World War to publish letters written by colleagues who were fighting at the Front.¹⁷³ Howard Cox has argued that the Company realised the potential the magazine had for uniting a diverse staff who were spread across the globe

¹⁷² Heller, Michael, 'Company Magazines 1880-1940: An Overview', *Management and Organisational History*, 3, 3-4 (2008) p. 179

¹⁷³ Cox, Howard, 'Shaping a corporate identity from below: The role of the BAT Bulletin' *Management and Organisational History*, 3, 3-4 (2008) p. 199

and continued it until the 1930s with this aim.¹⁷⁴ Heller states that many company magazines were utilised by large corporations in order to unite companies and workers who were divided across geographical and hierarchical lines.¹⁷⁵ Cox argues that the growth of companies from family-run firms to large corporations necessitated these magazines, not only to unify the companies but also to instil a sense of the “family ethos” back into the organisation.¹⁷⁶

The first railway company magazine was produced by members of staff on the Great Western Railway as early as the 1860s.¹⁷⁷ *The Great Western Railway Magazine*, published from 1888 by the Great Western Railway Temperance Union as a vehicle to promote abstinence amongst the staff was the first magazine officially associated with a railway company. However, by 1903 the Temperance Union was in financial difficulty and the Company offered to waive their debt to take over the magazine.¹⁷⁸ A large number of other railway companies followed suit producing their own magazines. By the time the railway companies of Britain were amalgamated in 1923, the benefits of producing a company magazine had been revealed and the four new major railway companies were all aware of the ways in which they could use their magazines to mould and shape a version of the idea of the ‘railway family’ that encompassed all their new employees. The way in which this idea was presented within railway company print media was continuously positive despite the often tumultuous nature of the railway industry.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 211

¹⁷⁵ Heller, ‘Company Magazines’ p. 186

¹⁷⁶ Cox, ‘Shaping a corporate identity’ p. 199

¹⁷⁷ This magazine, published between 1862 and 1864 is held at the National Railway Museum, 10268R

¹⁷⁸ Pole, Felix, *His Book* (Town and Country Press, Bracknell, 1968) p. 16

The railway company magazines were designed to provide information about the history and working of the Company, to educate staff on important railway matters and new techniques, as well as acting as a way to encourage an 'esprit de corps' amongst employees and the wider readership of the magazine. One of the most important elements of the railway company magazines was their didactic nature, especially on matters that concerned the companies: the business of railways and railway working, but also the moral, physical and intellectual needs of employees and their families. This was also a central tenet of the idea of the 'railway family' – supporting and helping oneself and others through a bond of kinship. The magazines extolled the virtues of the idea of the 'railway family' alongside the more obvious promotion of the social and educational elements of the magazine.

The wider readership of the railway company magazines, the wives and children of railwaymen, were acknowledged by the companies in their magazines from a very early date. Some railway company magazines provided separate pages for women and children. These pages existed in a small number of magazines even before the number of female railway workers increased significantly during and after the First World War, demonstrating that they were initially targeted towards the wives of railwaymen. Many of the subjects discussed on these women's pages reflected the different attitudes that existed towards female railway workers and the non-working female relatives of railwaymen. Women workers were often dismissed as a temporary phenomenon, 'doing their bit' during the war time emergency or earning a small amount of extra money before they fulfilled their preferable destiny of marriage and motherhood. Nevertheless, all women, whether workers or wives, were included in the definition of the wider 'railway family' as envisaged by the railway companies. It was

just as important for railway companies to secure their loyalty and support as it was for them to encourage railwaymen to buy into the idea of the 'railway family'.

Tim Holmes has argued that magazines target a certain readership and base their content on the ideals, hopes and fears of that readership in order to create a relationship. This relationship encouraged an 'imagined community' to grow between readers and the magazine itself.¹⁷⁹ It was imperative that if the idea of the 'railway family' was going to take hold, the magazines needed to create a sense of community between railway employees, their non-working family members and the railway companies. Railway company magazines were primarily aimed at company employees and their families, although those outside the railway industry could buy the magazines at railway stations or from the magazine agents. This chapter will demonstrate how these magazines were utilised by the railway companies in the ways that Holmes describes, to create a bond between company and employee and enhance the idea of the 'railway family'.

Railway company management initially adopted a paternalistic approach to their workforce. Paternalism can be defined as "the interference with a person's liberty of action justified by reasons referring exclusively to welfare, good, happiness, needs, interests or values of the person being coerced."¹⁸⁰ This characterisation of paternalism by Gerald Dworkin mirrors some of the reasons why railway companies chose to act as paternalistic employers, not only for the benefit of their businesses, but also for the perceived benefit of their employees. The management and Directors of railway companies saw themselves as 'father figures', exerting their influence for good.

¹⁷⁹ Holmes, Tim, 'Mapping the Magazine' *Journalism Studies*, 8, 4 (2007) p.514

¹⁸⁰ Dworkin, Gerald, 'Paternalism', *The Monist*, 56, 1 Philosophy and Public Policy (1972) p.65

As part of this paternalistic sense of duty, the railway companies provided education, welfare and social opportunities, such as housing, sports clubs and Mutual Improvement classes. The creation of the idea of the 'railway family' was a mechanism of railway company paternalism and industrial welfare. By creating remuneration packages that also drew in non-working members of an individual's family into the wider 'railway family', railway companies were attempting to create a core of loyal workers. Bart Dredge, when discussing large textile mills in the Southern United States, has argued that welfare packages bridged the "impersonal gulf" between workers and management.¹⁸¹ By associating more closely with employees and their families the management could lay claim to loyalty and co-operation through these welfare schemes.¹⁸² Company magazines were one of the most important devices to facilitate this paternalism and industrial welfare and build an 'imagined community' of railway workers, their families and company management.

The system of appeal and memorialisation by which employee requests for welfare and grievances were heard remained in place well into the twentieth century. Railwaymen had to submit an application to their line manager, and in the case of a welfare appeal for men who had joined the Company in the 1830s and 1840s before welfare funds emerged, these had to be sanctioned by a doctor, clergyman or 'person of responsibility'.¹⁸³ This contributed to the continuation of Company patronage and paternalism as workers were still placed in a subordinate position to their employers as they had to "humbly approach" the Directors of the company and negotiate a

¹⁸¹ Dredge, Bart, 'Company magazines and the creation of industrial cooperation: A case study from the Southern textile industry, 1880-1940' *Management and Organisational History*, 3, 3-4 (2008) p.274

¹⁸² Ibid., p.273

¹⁸³ Revill, G, 'Liberalism and paternalism: Politics and corporate culture in 'railway derby', 1865 – 1875', *Social History*, 24, 2 (1999) p.210

complex system of deference and deputation in order to even have their case heard.¹⁸⁴ With the rise of railway trade unions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, the nature of this paternalism was challenged and forced to change.¹⁸⁵ Railway workers realised their value to the railway companies and joined trade unions in order to fight for better wages and conditions. As most railway companies refused to recognise unions before 1918, the rise of trade unionism on the railways changed the nature of the relationship between company management and workers, creating more tension and conflict. Railway companies claimed that trade unions were unsettling the “fairly happy and contented family” that they had been able to create, particularly because they challenged the idea of the ‘railway family’ as deployed by the railway companies. Their version emphasised loyalty to the company only, to the exclusion of class, occupational or other viable loyalties.¹⁸⁶ Harbison and Myers have argued that all company management were seeking subordination, loyalty and productivity. In order to do this, they needed to enforce discipline and gain the respect and allegiance of their employees. Loyalty was seen as the “positive identification with the enterprise” and a voluntary acceptance of managerial authority.¹⁸⁷ By challenging this loyalty, trade unions were challenging the foundations of railway company management.

Paternalism still remained a valuable tool for the railway companies to secure the loyalty of their staff, but the language of this paternalism altered after the First

¹⁸⁴ Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, p. 63 and Revill, ‘Liberalism and Paternalism’, p. 211

¹⁸⁵ For debates and discussions over the changing nature of paternalism on British railways see, Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, Joyce, Patrick. “The Factory Politics of Lancashire in the Later Nineteenth Century.” *The Historical Journal* 18, 3 (1975) pp. 525-53, McKenna, *The Railway Workers* and Revill, ‘Liberalism and paternalism’

¹⁸⁶ Bagwell, Phillip, ‘Transport’ in Wrigley, C. (ed.) *A History of British Industrial Relations 1875 – 1914* (Harvester Press, Brighton, 1982) pp. 230 - 237

¹⁸⁷ Harbison F. and Myers, C., *Management in the Industrial World* (McGraw-Hill, New York, 1959) p. 48

World War. This was due to the fact that during the War railway companies were forced to recognise the railway trade unions by the Government and negotiate with them face-to-face, in order to prevent strikes and disputes particularly over pay and war bonuses.¹⁸⁸ This negotiation “was so firmly ingrained by 1919 that it was never abandoned”, hence the language of paternalism and the companies’ version of the ‘railway family’ had to change during the war and afterwards to accommodate this new relationship.¹⁸⁹ After the First World War, the term ‘industrial welfare’ became more commonly used to describe the educational, sporting and social facilities provided for railwaymen and their families by railway companies although it still mimicked earlier paternalistic practices with the addition of an element of ‘self-help’ that railwaymen themselves contributed towards.

The railway company definition of the ‘railway family’ was bound up with the changing nature of paternalism and industrial welfare. This was particularly pertinent with the enactment of the Railways Act 1921, which amalgamated the hundreds of smaller railway companies into four large ones in 1923 – the Great Western Railway Company (GWR), the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company (LMS), the London and North Eastern Railway Company (LNER) and the Southern Railway Company (SR). This new version of paternalism served multiple purposes: to continue to foster the loyalty of railwaymen and their families to the railway company, to strengthen the idea of the ‘railway family’ and challenge that of the trade unions, and to ensure healthy, well-educated employees who were more productive.¹⁹⁰

¹⁸⁸ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p. 218

¹⁸⁹ Bagwell, P., *The Railwaymen* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1963) p. 348

¹⁹⁰ Harbison and Myers, *Management*, p. 57

The extension of a company 'family' played a large role in the deployment of industrial welfare by railway companies. Employees were encouraged to make financial contributions to this welfare with the company's assistance and these schemes were actively promoted.¹⁹¹ Cox argues that welfare was used by companies to create a positive image of themselves to employees and outsiders.¹⁹² Whilst this may have been a factor for the railway companies, the maintenance of company loyalty was also crucial. By fostering company loyalty through industrial welfare, the railway companies were attempting to retain their workers, prevent strikes and create a sense of dependency on the company which would make workers more malleable to the demands of company management.¹⁹³ Welfare schemes also promoted a bond of loyalty to the company, rather than a trade union or other institutions.¹⁹⁴ Jones uses the example of the ICI welfare scheme, which included profit-sharing, a contributory pension for those ranked foreman and above and Works Councils, as one which was able to foster closer links between workers and their employers as opposed to workers and trade unions.¹⁹⁵ There was evidence that very well-cared for workers at Bournville or Lyons for example, did not seek to unionise.¹⁹⁶ Although this was not the case for railway companies, they sought to make their welfare schemes as attractive as possible and inclusive to all within the 'railway family'.

Many businesses, including cotton mills, factories and railway companies, used welfare schemes in a variety of guises in order to "surround himself [company

¹⁹¹ Heller, 'British Company magazines' p. 154

¹⁹² Cox, 'Shaping a corporate identity', p. 198

¹⁹³ Heller, 'Company Magazines', p. 184

¹⁹⁴ Jones, Helen, 'Employers' welfare schemes and Industrial Relations in Inter-War Britain', *Business History*, 25, 1 (1983) p.64

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, p.64

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p.70

management] with permanent efficient staff, happy and contented in their employment, who will not only work *for* him, but what is much more valuable, will work *with* him.”¹⁹⁷ The idea of a ‘railway family’ emphasised loyalty in terms that workers would be able to understand and recognise. However, the ‘railway family’ was a two-way process and it helped to emphasise the common interests the company and workers held: the company provided stability and industrial welfare whilst the workers remained loyal and worked hard to make the company profitable.¹⁹⁸ Railway company management paid “careful attention to reminding workers of the benefits they enjoyed and the advantages of remaining loyal and co-operating employees” through their magazines.¹⁹⁹ Large scale mergers, as occurred within the railway industry in the 1920s, had the potential to cause communication issues between employers and employees due to the growth in size, new employees and managerial changes that occurred, thus welfare schemes created a sense of common purpose.²⁰⁰

Colin Divall argues that the Company needed to ensure workers could “empathise to some degree with the content” of the magazines.²⁰¹ Divall states that to do this the magazines had to allow some form of criticism and argument from employees within the letters and articles.²⁰² This is most keenly demonstrated in the letters pages, which were a forum for debate between railway workers and between employees and the company. Suggestion pages also allowed employees to contribute

¹⁹⁷ Reproduced from a speech by Lord Leverhulme in Jones, ‘Employers’ welfare schemes’, p.61

¹⁹⁸ Heller, ‘British Company magazines’ p. 158, Cox, ‘Shaping a Corporate identity’ p. 199 and Heller, ‘Company Magazines’ p. 187

¹⁹⁹ Dredge, ‘Company magazines and the creation of industrial cooperation’, p.285

²⁰⁰ Jones, ‘Employers’ welfare schemes’, p.63

²⁰¹ Divall, Colin, “Civilising Velocity: Masculinity and the marketing of Britain’s passenger trains, 1921 – 1939” *Journal of Transport History*, 32, 2 (2001) p. 169

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 169

to better and more efficient ways of working. In 1919, the GWR committee stated that they had already considered 5,500 suggestions that had been sent in by staff.²⁰³

Heller argues that company magazines are an excellent way to explore an organisation and its “beliefs, ethos and value systems” from the inside.²⁰⁴ He also claims that the company magazines have been “surprisingly neglected”.²⁰⁵ By reading the railway company magazines in a new light, this chapter will argue that ideas about the ‘railway family’ were maintained and extended by the railway companies throughout the first half of the twentieth century. This was in order to ensure the workforce remained united through a turbulent period in British history and the history of the railway industry, including the two World Wars, a period of economic depression and the introduction of larger numbers of women into a traditionally male workforce. Within the magazines, the idea of the ‘railway family’ was represented in a variety of different guises throughout the period. The company magazines were continuously used as a vehicle to extol the virtues of the respective Railway Company and the benefits they provided to employees. They were also used to ensure that the idea of the ‘railway family’ that had been created by the railway companies remained unified during a period of changes that had the potential to cause considerable discontent and divisions.

This chapter focuses on a number of railway company magazines that came into existence during the period, some that lasted only a short number of years and others that continued throughout the period. An important focus are the women’s and

²⁰³ GWRM, 31, 1 (1919) p.2

²⁰⁴ Heller, ‘Company magazines’ p. 180

²⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 179

children's pages which were included in some of these magazines; it will be argued that these pages were a crucial way for railway companies to draw women and children into the idea of the 'railway family'. Another important factor in defining the idea of the 'railway family' was the language and techniques that these magazines used to create a sense of the company's identity and a community between staff of all grades and locations.

This chapter will argue that all railway company magazines used similar techniques to create a sense of the 'railway family' but those without women's and children's pages relied more heavily on other features to draw railwaymen and their families into the idea of the 'railway family'. These included repeating the language of the 'railway family' more often and more prominently or encouraging railwaymen and their families to support charitable funds such as those for widows and orphans, a cause which could easily appeal to any member of the 'railway family'.

3.1 Creating a company identity

One of the most important reasons for the foundation and distribution of a company magazine was the creation of a company identity, which was bound up in ideas of company loyalty and the 'railway family'. This idea encouraged railwaymen and their non-working wives and children to identify with the company that employed them, and by extension, to remain loyal to that company despite external pressures from other railway companies, trade unions or a competitive labour market. Railway companies used different methods to establish a company identity, and this can be seen most clearly in two different company magazines: The Great Western Railway (GWR) Magazine and the London, Midland and Scottish (LMS) Railway Magazine. One of the

reasons for these different approaches was the fact that the LMS was formed by the Railways Act as an amalgamation of a number of companies, all of whom had worked to establish their own discrete company identity and the loyalty of their staff. Therefore, the LMS had to work quickly to ensure that these employees from different railway companies were melded under the one banner with an equivalent amount of devotion that they held to their former companies. The GWR survived the Railways Act amalgamations with their long-standing company identity intact.

The GWR Magazine was one of the oldest railway company magazines in existence. Felix Pole, General Manager of the GWR from 1921, was appointed Editor in 1903 when the company took over production of the magazine; he overhauled it to make the magazine more attractive to staff, with articles on the day-to-day working of the Company and an opportunity to discover the social and educational activities they offered. His overhaul was a great success and in under a year the circulation of the magazine had increased from 2,500 in September 1903 to 11,000 in May 1904.²⁰⁶ By 1909, the Magazine had a circulation of 25,000, reaching both employees and others outside the Company including those who purchased the magazine at GWR stations and the families of employees who took the magazine home.²⁰⁷ Prior to the First World War, the GWR Magazine described its aim as “to supply up-to-date information of the doings of the Company, and those connected with it, without any class distinction whatever.”²⁰⁸ This emphasised that the Magazine was for all staff regardless of their status or grade.

²⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 18

²⁰⁷ Thompson, Matthew, ‘A Master Whose Heart is in the Land’: Picturing the Tourist Utopia of the Great Western Railway, 1897 – 1947 (Unpublished PhD, University of York, 2011) p. 355 and Heller, ‘British Company Magazines’, p. 148

²⁰⁸ GWRM 16, 1 (1904) p. 5

Gradually the earlier focus on the Temperance Union was reduced, although reports of meetings continued to be included as temperance remained an important quality for railwaymen. The GWR Temperance Union provides an early example of the idea of the 'railway family', encouraging women and children to participate in an activity that benefitted the whole family and by extension, the railway company. Women and children were actively involved in the Temperance Union, performing songs and recitations at meetings and providing refreshments.²⁰⁹ Temperate men were considered to be better workers and did not spend their wages on alcohol so had more money to spend on their family's needs.²¹⁰

The LMS published their first magazine in 1923 and it is interesting to note how the idea of the 'railway family' was immediately utilised by the Editor to unite the old railway company employees under the new LMS banner. In an article on how the new Company was to work, the author declared "We are a family of 268,000 souls."²¹¹ Unlike the GWR, the Editors of the LMS Magazine took the decision to separate the Company's sports and social club into five divisions (London and Home Counties, South Midlands, North Midlands, Cumberland and Northern) and dedicate four pages of the Magazine to each of these divisions. This continued until 1936, when all areas of the LMS were covered in the Magazine as a whole rather than as separate districts. By using the existing local identity, the LMS could concentrate on enforcing their company identity and ethos on smaller sections of the workforce, rather than attempting to draw all workers from wide-ranging geographical locations together under one banner

²⁰⁹ GWRM, 7, 6 (1900) p. 70

²¹⁰ Taillon, Paul Michel, "'What we want is Good, Sober Men:' Masculinity, Respectability, and Temperance in the Railroad Brotherhoods, c. 1870-1910." *Journal of Social History* 36, 2 (2003) p.323

²¹¹ LMSM, 1, 1 (1923) p.23

immediately. The LMS Magazine also had a page entitled 'Our Juniors Page' for the junior members of staff and the older children of railwaymen. For the younger children, there was a 'Children's Page' and a page entitled 'A Page for the Women' for female members of staff and the wives and daughters of railwaymen. Alongside the local sports and social sections, the Company recognized that the Magazine had numerous different audiences and targeted sections of the Magazine to their specific needs whilst remaining part of the wider LMS 'railway family'.

Prior to the First World War, the GWR Magazine focused on creating a company identity that was shared between the staff by emphasising the long and loyal service of many GWR employees and by concentrating on the parallels between all GWR staff including their lives outside of work. This has been described as an 'imagined community', referencing the work of Benedict Anderson, by both Michael Heller and Michael Esbester when discussing the Company magazines.²¹² It was an 'imagined community' because of the large geographical distances between staff on the GWR and the LMS – the magazines united distant areas by creating a sense of commonality between railwaymen.

Articles that created a sense of the 'railway family' focused on the lives and attainments of railwaymen both inside and away from the industry. In the GWR Magazine a feature on 'Staff Commendations' was begun in February 1907, featuring short details on members of staff who had been commended by their superiors because of their actions in the events of emergencies or difficult situations.²¹³ Such articles

²¹² Heller, "British company magazines" p. 158 and Esbester, *Dead on the point of "Safety"*, p. 117. See Chapter 2 for a detailed discussion of the 'imagined community'.

²¹³ GWRM, 19, 2 (1907) p. 48

demonstrated the pride the company felt in these men, but also acted as a way to teach other employees what to do in the same situation. This approach was replicated in the LMS magazine, giving honourable mentions to staff who had achieved commendations for bravery or outstanding achievement in the course of their duty. When the story was particularly unusual, for example in the case of a Junior Vanguard who foiled a robbery, a photograph of the staff member and a detailed version of the story was included.²¹⁴

During the First and Second World Wars these types of articles, extolling the virtues of railwaymen and their brave and heroic deeds during the war, were very common in every railway company magazine. Many of the reports or obituaries contained euphemistic descriptions of injury and death, ensuring that although the war-time deaths of railwaymen were reported and their lives were celebrated, graphic details were not passed on to their family, friends or colleagues.²¹⁵ Railwaymen who were killed or injured were discussed in glowing terms and members of staff attempted to aid the family in any way they could. An excellent example of this is the way in which twin brothers John and Henri Villiers Russell were commemorated both in the magazine and by their London and North Western railway company (LNWR) 'family'. The two brothers served on HMS Formidable and were killed when the ship was sunk on New Year's Day, 1915. The Chief Mechanical Engineer at Crewe, Mr C. J. Bowen Cooke, arranged the repatriation of their remains and "a committee of neighbours, friends, and workmates of the Joiners' Shop was formed to start a fund in order to provide a suitable memorial." A reproduction of a poem, written by a member of the Electrical and Signal Department at Crewe and included on a postcard that was sold to

²¹⁴ LMSM, 5, 3 (1928) p.97

²¹⁵ Rawlinson, Mark, *British Writing of the Second World War* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 2000) p.19

fund the memorial, was featured on the page in the Magazine. This poem included details which referenced their childhood, railway work and service in the Navy: "Together they worked, together they played,/ By life's cares and worries they were ne'er dismayed,/Together they joined the Ambulance Corps,/ Together they studied and came to the fore..."²¹⁶

It was crucial that the railway companies were able to ensure that the 'railway family' on the Home Front was as united with each other as they were with their colleagues in the Forces. To this end, they also included flattering articles about those staff who were required to stay at home because they were necessary in order to keep the railways running. Women workers were praised for setting an excellent example to others with their hard work and patriotism, for example the widow who was working as a waiting room attendant and selling flowers from her garden to raise money to send care packages to soldiers.²¹⁷ The wives, mothers and daughters of railwaymen were celebrated in the GWR magazine for keeping "The Kitchen Front" running smoothly and cooking, cleaning and caring for railwaymen.²¹⁸ Another article in the LNWR magazine in 1915 reported the "Patriotic Fete" that the LNWR threw for injured servicemen at their London Athletic Club ground. The entertainment was provided by members of staff and included music, theatre and games. The General Manager of the Company closed the Fete with a speech in which he stated that "anything the London and North Western Railway Company had done was only a very small repayment in view of all the soldiers had performed."²¹⁹ These articles were

²¹⁶ London North Western Gazette (LNWG), 4, 40 (1915) p.386

²¹⁷ LNWG, 4, 40 (1915) p.572

²¹⁸ GWRM, 55, 3 (1943) p.33

²¹⁹ LNWG, 4, 37 (1915) pp.267-270

designed to demonstrate to those who read the magazines, to railwaymen, their families and those outside the railway industry who bought the magazine, the high calibre of railwaymen and temporary female workers employed by the company and the pride that the railway companies had in their employees. In this way, the idea of the 'railway family' was used in a paternalistic sense, much as parents would be proud of their children.

3.2 Uniting the 'railway family'

In November 1904, a series of articles were produced in the GWR Magazine entitled "When Off Duty: Achievements of Great Western Men" which described the leisure accomplishments of GWR men of all grades, including a musician, an actor, scientists, a champion swimmer and a taxidermist.²²⁰ By the early 1920s and the inception of the LMS Magazine, it was an accepted and encouraged idea that railwaymen had hobbies outside the railway industry and numerous articles on stamp collecting, keeping animals and horticulture demonstrate this. For example, the LMS Natural History Society featured in an article in the magazine in February 1926.²²¹ These articles revealed just how diverse the interests of staff were and, in order to provide a broader education and appropriate Company-sanctioned hobbies, the railway companies supported a number of societies whose meetings and achievements were advertised through the magazines. These included the Temperance Union, the Literary Society, the Musical Society, the Debating Society, the Technical School, the

²²⁰ GWRM, 16 (1904) and 17 (1905). This series of articles appears in Volume 16 issues number 11, p. 192 and 12, p. 210 and Volume 17, issues 1, p. 8, 2, pp. 30 – 31 and 4 p. 68

²²¹ LMSM, 3, 2 (1926) p.52

Ambulance classes and the Athletics Association which all had branches in London and other areas across the network. Heller and Cox both discuss how the popularity of organised sports within Companies arose, in part, because of the company magazines that promoted them. Team sports encouraged bonding, a healthy lifestyle and a sense of community fostered through competition with teams from different areas of the Company.²²² Membership of sporting, social and educational societies was beneficial to railway workers and their family members because it provided opportunities to learn new skills and develop existing ones, as well as cementing relationships with other members of the 'railway family'. However, having employees and their family members in these societies was also a boon for railway companies because they fostered loyalty and a sense of community and gave railwaymen less opportunity to take part in trade union activities in their leisure time.

The loyalty and support the provision of these sports clubs and societies were able to confer onto the respective company is effectively summed up in an article by a railwayman in the LMS Magazine, who commented on how, in agreement with the President of the NUR Mr J. H. Thomas, "if railwaymen were prepared to fight, if need be, for their rights, it was not inconsistent with a spirit of co-operation, goodwill, and understanding with those at the top."²²³ The article's author continues that this co-operation and goodwill extended to the provision of land for sports clubs, free educational lectures and facilities and the loan of £1,000,000 to Company employees to enable them to purchase their own houses which was of direct benefit to the whole

²²² Heller, 'Company Magazines' p. 186 and Cox, 'Shaping a corporate identity' p. 208. Forming sports clubs was a popular paternalistic device and was concurrent with the middle-class preoccupation with the health and welfare of the working-class, for example see Heller, Michael, 'Sport, bureaucracies and London clerks 1880 - 1939' *The International Journal of the History of Sport*, 25, 5 (2008) pp. 579 - 614

²²³ LMSM, 4, 4 (1927) p.121

family. In return for these gestures, railwaymen and their families were bound into a reciprocal gesture of “co-operation, goodwill and understanding” by working hard, supporting the Company and limiting industrial unrest. This followed from a radio broadcast Thomas made on industrial welfare that stated that paternalism acted as “lubrication to machinery” for “health and happiness”.²²⁴ The fact that the leader of the largest railway trade union, the NUR, was encouraging unionised railwaymen to co-operate with railway company management a year after the General Strike of 1926 is significant and demonstrates a new technique for trade unions in their dealings with management. The industrial welfare that railwaymen received and that focused on self-help rather than paternalism, was more acceptable to trade union members.²²⁵

By reporting on the social and educational activities of the companies as well as interesting news about the staff, the magazines created a sense of an ‘imagined community’ and a loyalty that encompassed the wide geographical boundaries of the individual company.²²⁶ Most of the social and educational clubs and facilities were founded by railway workers but were supported financially by the railway companies. The involvement of company management, officers and directors at prize giving ceremonies and annual events also underlined the fact that these social and educational clubs were for all staff and for all members of the ‘railway family’, even non-working women and children. Photographs in the magazine emphasised this, focusing particularly on the children who took part.²²⁷ Children were encouraged to become part of the ‘railway family’ because they were considered to be the future for

²²⁴ *The Railway Review*, 22/6/1923, p.7

²²⁵ Todd, Selina, *The People: The Rise and Fall of the Working Class* (John Murray, London 2015) p.92

²²⁶ Heller, Michael, ‘Company Magazines’, pp. 187 - 188

²²⁷ LNWG, 4, 36 (1915) p.257

the railway companies, as many sons and (later during the period) daughters, followed their fathers into the railway industry. The children of railwaymen could also be moulded into ideal railway company employees through the idea of the 'railway family' and the welfare schemes that were available to railwaymen and their families.²²⁸

One of the ways that railway company magazines were able to create an 'esprit de corps' and emphasise the need for the idea of the 'railway family' was to mobilise railwaymen and their families to support a charitable and uncontroversial deserving cause, especially one that benefitted both railway companies and the 'railway family'. For the London and South Western (LSWR) Railway Company in particular, this was the Widows and Orphans Fund and the LSWR Orphanage. The LSWR Gazette, which began in 1881 as a magazine compiled and edited by staff, cost one penny and the proceeds from the magazine were split between the Widows and Orphans Fund and the LSWR Orphanage. The Gazette contained the phrase "The orphans plead that you will neither borrow nor lend this paper – they are more in need of a penny than you" at the bottom of one of the pages in almost every issue.²²⁹ By October 1914 the LSWR Gazette had contributed £2380 to the Widows and Orphans Fund and £2215 to the LSWR Orphanage through the sales of the paper and their contribution schemes.²³⁰ The Gazette was taken over by the LSWR on the 1st January 1918, and the documents from this takeover note that the Company agreed to continue funding "the Societies and Associations connected with the Company now, or hereafter to be, established for the benefit of the Company's servants and their widows or children" from the profits of the

²²⁸ Dredge, 'Company magazines and the creation of industrial cooperation', p.275

²²⁹ London and South Western Railway Gazette (LSWG), 01/10/1902, p.10

²³⁰ LSWG, 01/10/1914, p.7

magazine.²³¹ From 1916, the LSWR Gazette began to resemble the format of most other Company magazines, including educational articles, social notes and promoting the welfare schemes that the Company supported.

The LSWR Gazette contained a large number of articles about the Widows and Orphans Fund and the Orphanage and the ways that the Company and the 'railway family' supported these institutions. From April 1901, the 'Orphanage Notes' section of the Gazette listed the subscribers to the Orphanage and the amount they donated.²³² This acted as a way that the 'railway family' could be congratulated for their generosity, but also as a device to encourage those who did not contribute. The Ladies' Committee of the Orphanage organised events to raise money for the orphans and provided treats for the children including their Christmas dinner.²³³ These committees were a feature of railway company social and sporting schemes and allowed the wives of railwaymen to participate in activities that were organised for company employees, drawing them into the idea of the 'railway family'. The Orphanage also provided the LSWR with ready-made employees, as the "boys join the Company's service" and the new Matrons of the Orphanage appointed in December 1905 "spent their girlhood in the Orphanage."²³⁴ The children who were placed in the Orphanage were surrounded by Company branding, Company employees and were educated in the way that the Company worked and the idea of the 'railway family' from a young age. The Orphanage children participated in social and fundraising events, performing plays, singing songs and demonstrating what they had learnt in classes in such a way as to express their

²³¹ London and South Western Railway Company, *Extract from the Proceedings of the Court of Directors*, 22/11/1917, The National Archives, RAIL 411/937

²³² LSWG, (1901) p.12

²³³ LSWG, (1902) p.6

²³⁴ LSWG, (1902) p.11 and LSWG, (1905) p.9

gratitude to those who donated to fund their care and also to attest to the education and training that they were receiving at the Orphanage.²³⁵ The Widows and Orphans Fund and the maintenance of the LSWR Orphanage brought railway workers and their families together under the banner of the 'railway family' because the prospect of leaving their wives as widows and their children as orphans was something many railway employees faced on a daily basis due to the dangerous nature of their job.

The creation of an 'imagined community' and by extension, the development of the 'railway family', involved reporting on news from the different branches of the Company and occasionally this news involved railwaymen's families. For example, the outing for employees and their families from Swindon Works in 1907 was described with some pride as "the largest excursion in the world" as 25,539 adults and children were transported around the country for their annual holiday.²³⁶ Exceptional railway families began to feature more frequently in the GWR magazine from 1908. They were praised for their long service and for the lengthy service of their families. These families were upheld as an example of an ideal railway family – long service by the father, encouraging his sons to follow the same course. This provided railway companies with amenable and easily managed employees who knew that loyalty provided stability for their family. These families with a tradition of long service to the GWR were highlighted in the Magazine, including one family with a total of 800 years' service in the GWR Locomotive Department between them. In this case a GWR employee, William Henry Robson wrote to the Magazine to highlight his family's heritage with the Company, and it was stated that "This record of one family speaks

²³⁵ LSWG, (1908) p.5

²³⁶ GWRM, 19, 8 (1907) p. 180

volumes for an employment which many would have us believe is shunned by the average working man, but our correspondent adds...that he can without the slightest hesitation say that he has never seen employés (sic) treated so considerately as those of the Great Western Railway."²³⁷ The GWR was using the example of the long-serving history of their employees as a positive comment on their welfare schemes and relations with the 'railway family'. Another family with four generations who had been employed by the GWR were also featured, including photographs of each member, in the May 1913 issue.

²³⁷ GWRM, 20, 7 (1908) p. 143 and p. 157

Figure 3. Photographs of a railway family included in the GWR magazine in order to emphasise the loyalty and long service of their employees. GWRM, 25, 5 (1913) p. 147, National Railway Museum, York, 1.0270

The Balding family, pictured in Figure 3, claimed a connection to the Kennet and Avon Canal Traffic department for the previous 124 years through four generations of their family. The GWR Magazine continued to include these exceptional railway families periodically. During the Second World War, these reports began to include female family members, for example, 'A Family Group' featured a short report and a photograph of a father and son, who were the driver and fireman on a train and his daughter who was the guard.²³⁸

Family reports were included in the LMS Magazine but they most often originated from the staff themselves, who wrote letters extolling their long service with the respective Companies that were then amalgamated into the LMS. One railway family, a father and three sons, had 214 years of service in total.²³⁹ One of the challenges for the newly-formed LMS was to demonstrate how loyal their staff were, as they could not call upon the long-service tradition in the same way that the GWR could. Rather than emphasising long service to the LMS these reports often focused on the number of family members employed, for example five brothers were all employed as engine drivers, whilst their three sisters married two other engine drivers and a fireman.²⁴⁰ Although the LMS could not call upon a long heritage as a railway company, they could demonstrate how well their industrial welfare policies worked in encouraging railwaymen to stay with the Company and influencing their own family members to join the Company's service. This is similar to the way that the London North Western railway company recognised the loyalty of their staff by including

²³⁸ GWRM, 56, 9 (1944) p.142

²³⁹ LMSM, 2, 2 (1925) p.62

²⁴⁰ LMSM, 15, 1 (1938) p.14

reports of long-serving families as stand-alone pieces or adding such details to retirement notices or obituaries, for example a report of one family of a father and his seven sons who were able to work a section of the line at Mold Junction themselves, with just a fireman from outside the family. They were the signalman, engine driver, two breaksmen, booking clerk, shunter and relief signalman, porter and messenger.²⁴¹

During the First World War, the LNWR Gazette also used the example of railway families “doing their bit” to demonstrate the pride of the Company in its employees and their families; two examples include a driver with five sons, all of whom worked for the Company and all of whom had enlisted; another featured a driver with seven sons and two son’s-in-law who had joined up.²⁴² Obituaries and reports from the Front were included alongside letters written by LNWR men who had joined up. These letters included details of their life at the Front and were intended to inform railwaymen how their colleagues were faring and ensure that the sense of community spirit was maintained between railwaymen at home and those serving overseas, for example, Private H.G. Thomas, of the District Superintendent’s Office, wrote “Just a line to let you know how we are faring out here...We are having a fine old time out here, and have got all sorts of jobs, such as shifting post bags, loading shells, ammunition &c. (sic), also carrying wounded from the train to the hospital, loading horses into vans, and shunting; in fact, we are doing anything and everything...We are all looking forward to getting in the firing line, and also to be home by Christmas...”²⁴³ The letters included in the magazine were positive in their tone and it was clear that the soldiers were aware

²⁴¹ LNWG, 2, 8 (1913) p.140

²⁴² LNWG, 5, 41 (1916) p. 23 and LNWG, 5, 43 (1916) p. 87

²⁴³ LNWG, 3, 27 (1914) pp.311-312

that their letters were being scrutinised “I cannot tell you where, as all letters are censored and letters with names of places in are burnt.”²⁴⁴ Some letters also included exhortations to join up, “I pity the poor chaps in London who don’t go to the front or join the R.N.V.R.”²⁴⁵ Leading Seaman A. G. Groom, formerly of the Expenditure Office, Euston, even wrote of his internment in Holland, “I have had a most thrilling and dangerous experience and have come out without a scratch, although absolutely exhausted...It is horrible to think that we shall not be allowed to take any further part in the war.”²⁴⁶ These letters allowed railwaymen and their families to read about the experiences of fellow railwaymen in service and take pride in their efforts and by, association, the Company that had fostered them and facilitated this exchange. The ‘imagined community’ of railway workers was extended further, as railwaymen were encouraged to send their copies of the *Gazette* to LNWR railwaymen at the Front.²⁴⁷

Although the social and personal sections of the magazine were important in the creation of a sense of ‘railway family’ identity, it was the educational and Company-based aspects that provided the majority of the focus for company magazines. Articles in the GWR Magazine included ‘How to get on in the Railway World’ and ‘Departmental Doings’, a section begun in 1906, which ensured that staff knew how the Company was run and were able to learn about the development of the GWR, the services and products they offered and developments in the British and International railway industry.²⁴⁸ Some LMS examples of these types of articles include ‘The Construction of

²⁴⁴ Ibid., p.312

²⁴⁵ LNWG, 3, 28 (1914) p.342

²⁴⁶ Ibid., p.341

²⁴⁷ LNWG, 5, 51 (1916) p.337

²⁴⁸ GWRM, 16 (1904) and GWRM 18 (1906)

the Modern Locomotive' and 'Some important LMS Goods Stations'.²⁴⁹ By creating a knowledgeable workforce who were schooled in the idea that their railway company was the premier railway company in the world, in terms of both the services they offered and the employment and stability they provided, the magazines fostered a sense of pride in the Company. In turn, the Company hoped that this pride in themselves, their work and the Company would develop into an ingrained loyalty towards their employer.

The LNWR Gazette is another example of a railway company realising the potential a staff magazine had for reaching all employees and using the idea of the 'railway family' to create a tight-knit, loyal workforce. The Gazette began as the social and sporting arm of the LNWR London Athletics Club in 1911 but the company soon came to appreciate how successful it could be and took it over a year later with the aim "to interest each other in all our doings, whether at work or play, gathering together the threads of casual intercourse and weaving them into a bond of mutual understanding and appreciation, for even if we are scattered over a large area and our individual concerns are naturally numerous and varied, yet there is much we have in common."²⁵⁰ The creation of the notion of a 'railway family' bound together through the Company, despite distance or grade, was also crucial in maintaining this loyalty to each other and to the railway company. The language of the 'railway family' was one that promoted the Company's interests in line with that of railwaymen. Although it was intended initially to report on the social and sporting events that the Company facilitated, the LNWR Gazette also utilised the idea that the magazine could be used for

²⁴⁹ LMSM, 9, 11 (1932) p.363 and 10, 1 (1933) p.5 for some examples within these series of articles

²⁵⁰ LNWRG, 2, 5 (1913) p.3

educational purposes, reporting on news and developments from across the company.²⁵¹ It was beneficial to the Company for railwaymen to be sober, well-educated and interested in the business of the railway industry and their particular railway company, which they could learn of through the magazine. This in turn ensured that railwaymen received stable employment, the possibility of promotion and remunerations such as housing and entertainment. This utilisation of the 'railway family' by railway companies remained constant throughout the period.

3.3 The language of the 'railway family' – an example from the GWR Magazine

The Great Western Railway Company had a strong sense that the Company and workers were bound together as a 'family'. In a more prominent way than many other railway company magazines, the GWR magazine used the language of the 'railway family' to encourage workers to identify with this idea. One important reason for this was the fact that they never included the women's or children's pages that appeared in other railway company magazines, therefore the language of the 'railway family' had to resonate not only with their employees but also with their non-working family members. This language first appeared just after the First World War and was strongest during the inter-war years, when the economic position of the railway company was particularly turbulent and the loyalty of workers and their family members needed to be ensured. The idea of the 'railway family' was demonstrated in a number of articles and speeches that were reproduced in the Magazine. An article in

²⁵¹ LN WG, 2, 5 (1913) p.13. The section on 'Company Developments' was begun very early in the life of the magazine and more educational and informative material was included over the next ten years

July 1920 entitled 'Our Railway' emphasised the bond that existed between railwaymen, "there runs through us a sort of brotherliness. It knits us into a single family."²⁵² In 1923 after the amalgamation of a number of smaller railway companies into the larger Great Western Railway network and on the inauguration of the GWR Social and Educational Union, an article was printed in the magazine that was designed to demonstrate how quickly and smoothly the amalgamation of the staff had occurred, noting, "their appreciation of the happy family they had joined."²⁵³ This issue was of paramount importance to the GWR because they needed the new staff to relinquish their loyalty and identity to their old company and to create a bond between employees and the GWR as soon as possible in order that they did not cause tension within the existing system of working.

The idea of the 'railway family' permeated from the top of the organisation to the bottom, with one shareholder submitting an article to the magazine in May 1925 entitled "The Great Western 'Family'."²⁵⁴ At a joint event between the Bristol division of the Social and Educational Union and the Ambulance Classes in Chippenham, the President of the Social and Educational Union made a speech that was reproduced in the magazine. He emphasised the paternalism of the railway companies that still existed under the guise of industrial welfare and the 'railway family', "They, of the Great Western Railway, could claim to be a happy family from the highest to the lowest...The whole idea of the Union was to unite all who belonged to the Great Western Railway

²⁵² GWRM, 32, 7 (1920) p.142

²⁵³ GWRM, 35, 1 (1923) p. 37

²⁵⁴ GWRM, 37, 5 (1925) p. 173

into one happy family, and as its president - or, as he preferred to put it, its father - he was proud to see such a gathering.”²⁵⁵

The paternalistic language of the GWR ‘railway family’ is a feature of the magazine that was not replicated on the same scale in the other company magazines. One of the reasons for this was that the GWR continued to be one of the most traditional railway companies and continued to rely more on paternalistic practices and language than industrial welfare, which emphasised self-help alongside company support. These traditional practices, such as the continued provision of social and sporting clubs, were still successful in ensuring that their workers felt a strong sense of company identity and loyalty towards the GWR and the ‘railway family’.

This is not to state that all GWR employees were part of this ‘happy family’. Alfred Williams’ work, *Life in a Railway Factory* contains criticism of the GWR and their working practices including their lack of recognition for the rights of workers, stating that “He [employers] will not admit that the one under his authority has any rights of his own.”²⁵⁶ Williams also criticised the GWR for their welfare policies, claiming that although the Directors declared that they cared about the welfare of their employees, they still allowed “excessively autocratic and severe” foremen to dominate workers under their control.²⁵⁷

Williams’ worked in the GWR Swindon Works and his criticism reflected the potential alienation felt by some railwaymen. The defensive reply of the GWR revealed the concern of the Company to this challenge to their ideology. They stated that the

²⁵⁵ GWRM, 39, 12 (1927) p.504

²⁵⁶ Williams, Alfred, *Life in a Railway Factory* (Sutton Publishing, Stroud, 2007) First published in 1915, p.8

²⁵⁷ Ibid., p.58

views represented in *Life in a Railway Factory* were “from this particular worker’s own point of view”.²⁵⁸ In their article, they were quick to point out that Williams’ temperament was not suited to life in the Works, as his “heart was in hedgerows, flowers, and streamlets” and that “At the forge Mr. Williams was utterly out of his element”.²⁵⁹ The Company questioned Williams’ state of mind, asking “What man in a normal state of mind would bemoan that the workshops were not situated in a flower garden?”²⁶⁰ They also refuted many of his statements about the management of the Works and stated that “It is fortunate for the industrial welfare of the nation that workers of this type are rare, and that the men usually take a commendable interest in the vast and important activities that they carry on within the factory walls.”²⁶¹ After questioning his whole attitude to work, the author of the article questioned why “he clung to it [employment in the Works] for upwards of twenty years.”²⁶² Finally, they characterised much of his book as “bitter prejudices and unwholesome gibes.”²⁶³ By questioning Williams’ attitude, his state of mind and his ability to do his job, the GWR were attempting to deflect any criticism of the Company or their working practices onto the author. They were keen to point out that “Other portions of the book show that the author’s soured view of life in the railway factory was not shared by other men who worked there.”²⁶⁴ It was key for the GWR to exclude Williams’ from their version of the ‘railway family’ and ensure that other workers did not identify with his statements.

²⁵⁸ GWRM, 28, 2 (1916) p.43

²⁵⁹ Ibid., p.43

²⁶⁰ Ibid., p.43

²⁶¹ Ibid., p.44

²⁶² Ibid., p.45

²⁶³ Ibid., p.45

²⁶⁴ Ibid., p.45

These statements were somewhat revised in a later article about Williams' work published in 1939, nine years after he died. Within this article, it was stated that "His description of factory conditions thirty years ago is sincere, and on the whole accurate, as many people have testified..."²⁶⁵ This was a major retraction from their earlier statements questioning Williams' state of mind when the book was published. The article was keen to state however, that the conditions that Williams describes were no longer prevalent and that greater attention was paid to the health, safety and welfare of workers, something that Williams "would be more satisfied with".²⁶⁶ In retrospect, the GWR were 'pardoning' the "hammerman poet" and they stated that "The book, however, cannot be dismissed as the outpourings of a discontented and fanciful theorist", of which they were guilty in 1916.²⁶⁷ This rehabilitation of Williams by the GWR drew him once again into the idea of the 'railway family' and emphasised the shared history that GWR employees of the day had with their predecessors, an important element of an 'imagined community'.

The idea of the GWR 'railway family' also emphasised the benefits the company was able to offer railwaymen and their families, socially, educationally and materially. In contrast to some of the other magazines, the GWR Magazine did not make any provision within the pages of the magazine for women or children so the use of the language of the 'railway family' was particularly important in ensuring this idea was taken on by the staff and their non-working wives and children who came into contact with the magazine via their relatives employed on the GWR. When discussing the

²⁶⁵ GWRM, 51, 3 (1939) p.124

²⁶⁶ Ibid., p.124

²⁶⁷ Ibid., p.124

‘railway family’, the GWR were clear that it was open to all railwaymen, their wives and children, for example in an article on the planned new Staff Association Institutes in 1945, the Company stated that one benefit was that they would enable “employees, their wives and families to spend many happy hours together.”²⁶⁸ However, it is unclear whether women and children in particular were drawn into the idea of the ‘railway family’ by this tactic or whether the women’s and children’s pages were more successful. The example of the GWR Magazine also demonstrates that not all railwaymen were drawn successfully into the idea of the ‘railway family’ and when this was the case, as with Alfred Williams, there was an attempt made by the Company to exclude them using the language within their magazine.

3.4 Women’s Pages in railway company magazines

The explicit language of a family relationship between railway company, employees and their non-working family members was not used as prolifically by other companies within their magazines. Although the LMS Editors emphasised that “The Magazine is not published for any one particular department or section of the staff. We try to consider the requirements of all LMS employees, irrespective of grade...”²⁶⁹ and “We know, of course, that in addition to our women employees there is a large proportion of wives of male subscribers who read our journal...”²⁷⁰ they did not use the language of the ‘railway family’ in the same way as the GWR. Rather than stating that men, women and children were all part of one Company ‘family’, there was an implicit

²⁶⁸ GWRM, 57, 11 (1945) p.185

²⁶⁹ LMSM, 15, 8 (1938) p.375

²⁷⁰ LMSM, 16, 4 (1939) p.159

understanding that the non-working wives and family members of railwaymen were important to the Company through the addition of children's pages and women's pages in railway company magazines such as the LMS magazine, the GER magazine and the LNWR magazine. The LNWR magazine also stated that "our aim is to interest each other in all our doings, whether at work or play, gathering together the threads of casual intercourse and weaving them into a bond of mutual understanding and appreciation, for even if we are scattered over a large area and our individual concerns are naturally numerous and varied, yet there is much we have in common."²⁷¹ Rather than specifying the audience their paper was aimed at, the LNWR took the view that by discussing different interests, hobbies and concerns they were able to cater to all members of the 'railway family'.

The idea of a woman's page and the messages that they contained during this period were not new for many women. The number of magazines that were targeted towards women greatly increased between 1900 and 1948 and included *Peg's Paper*, *Woman* and *Woman's Own*. These magazines promoted certain feminine ideals to their readers, discussing what was considered acceptable in manners, morals and domestic life.²⁷² They reflected what were considered the most important issues that women faced on a day-to-day basis across the country: topics that were primarily concerned with the home and family, a women's "natural" place.²⁷³ Working women did feature in these women's magazines although it was made clear that employment was considered to be the second-best option, and not as preferred as marriage and

²⁷¹ LNWG, 2, 5 (1913) p.3

²⁷² Shevelov, Kathryn, *Women and Print Culture. The construction of femininity in the early periodical* (Routledge, London, 1989) p.195

²⁷³ Leman, Joy, "The Advice Of A Real Friend': Codes of Intimacy and Oppression in Women's Magazines 1937 - 1955', *Women's Studies International Quarterly*, 3 (1980) p.65

motherhood.²⁷⁴ Despite the prominence of the women's movement during this period, and their sustained campaigns for voting reform, changes in marriage and divorce laws and equal work and pay opportunities for women, these discussions primarily stayed off the pages of the women's sections in railway company magazines.²⁷⁵

Leman argues that women's magazines used a direct form of address to appear as if the advice that they were giving on issues of the home, family, relationships or behaviour was being given directly to the reader from a sympathetic friend or sister.²⁷⁶ This argument is supported by Greenfield and Reid drawing on evidence from *Women's Own* magazine in the 1930s. The "chatty editorials" encouraged women to identify with the magazines and absorb the ideals propagated about domesticity and the true role of women as housewives and mothers.²⁷⁷ These tactics were employed throughout the women's pages that appeared in railway company magazines, aiding railway companies in their efforts to foster the loyalty of women and disseminate the messages about the 'proper' areas with which women should be concerned.

Women's magazines were also used to raise the status of housework and its 'professionalisation' especially with the growth of labour-saving devices after the First World War.²⁷⁸ Although this idea was still rooted in the ideology that a woman's primary role was in the domestic sphere, it emphasised the way that the traditional skills of the housewife could be combined with the new skills that many women had learnt during the First World War or in the period of work they undertook before

²⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 69

²⁷⁵ Thane, Pat (ed.) *Cassell's Companion to Twentieth Century Britain* (Cassell and Co., London, 2001) p.412

²⁷⁶ Leman, 'The Advice Of A Real Friend', p.63

²⁷⁷ Greenfield, Jill and Reid, Chris, 'Women's Magazines and the commercial orchestration of femininity in the 1930s: Evidence from *Woman's Own*', *Media History*, 4, 2 (1998) p.163

²⁷⁸ Ibid., p.162

marriage, for example budgeting and managing the household's finances in a more professional manner.²⁷⁹ Thrift and economy were important skills that were promoted within the pages of women's magazines particularly during the economic depression of the 1930s.²⁸⁰ However these skills and ideas were not new for many working-class women, who had lived on restricted budgets for a number of years. Some women were particularly offended by women's magazines attempting to 'teach' working class women the techniques that they had used for so long to feed and clothe their families. An example can even be found in the LNWR Gazette as Gertrude Webb, the Editor of 'Tea Table Topics', the women's page in the LNWR magazine criticised the publicity directed at working-class women during the First World War that encouraged them to be thrifty. She argued that these women already knew exactly what they needed to do.²⁸¹ This placed the LNWR women's page at odds with much of the advice and information given on other railway company magazines women's pages that followed the traditional format espoused by other women's magazines.

The growth in women's magazines during the first half of the twentieth century was significant and those railway companies that chose to include women's pages within their magazines followed a similar format to many of the magazines targeted towards working-class women. The women's magazines acknowledged the activities that young girls could enjoy before marriage including work, sport and education but they wholeheartedly emphasised the idea that a woman's correct and 'natural' place was in the home as a wife and a mother.²⁸² These ideas were not new for most working-

²⁷⁹ Ibid., p.169

²⁸⁰ White, Cynthia, *Women's Magazines 1693 - 1968* (Michael Joseph Ltd, London, 1970) p.104

²⁸¹ LNWG, 4, 37 (1915) p.273

²⁸² Beetham, Margaret and Boardman, Kay (ed.) *Victorian Women's Magazines: An Anthology* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 2001)

class women and the railway company magazines were following a well-worn path with the ideas that were discussed on their women's pages. However, there were slight nuances on these women's pages which emphasised the particular circumstances faced by railwaymen's wives and mothers and their importance to the 'railway family' which did not appear in more general women's magazines.

3.4.1 An analysis of 'A Page for Women'

'A Page for Women' in the LMS Magazine was primarily targeted at housewives particularly in the latter half of the 1930s, when the main thrust of the page was recipes and household hints. Examples included an article on 'The Art of Housekeeping' and another on the 'Child Guidance Movement', designed to help mothers of disobedient or unruly children.²⁸³ The original aim of the page was, when it was first begun in 1925, to interest female LMS workers and the wives and daughters of railwaymen. Articles on "dress, expenditure, cookery, health and household matters" were for all female readers of the magazine.²⁸⁴ The first few years of 'A Page for Women' saw a mixture of articles for single female railway workers and married housewives including articles on dress for the "modern girl", how to tell stories for children and, to celebrate the Railway Centenary in 1925, an article that speculated on the position of women in 2025, including the possibility of a woman as General Manager.²⁸⁵ This latter article is particularly noteworthy because it posits the idea that women could rise to the upper echelons of railway management. At this point in time, the most prominent position

²⁸³ LMSM, 3, 6 (1926) p.215 and 9, 11 (1932) p.391

²⁸⁴ LMSM, 2, 2 (1925) p.65

²⁸⁵ LMSM, 2, 7 (1925) p.239

that a woman could achieve within a railway company was as a welfare supervisor or the manager of a clerical office. In order to achieve these positions, female railway workers had to remain unmarried and dedicate their life to the service of the company. This article can be seen as an attempt to inspire female railway workers towards higher positions within the Company or, more likely, it was a placatory measure written with the knowledge that this was inconceivable in the present and was construed as part of a more-or-less fantastical future.

The idea of the 'respectable' housewife was a key theme of 'A Page for Women' from 1925 onwards, and this is compatible with the common ideas of the time. Epithets such as, "Nor does the home worker's duty end with the preparation of good meals. She has a duty to herself and her household, to make the best of herself and of her surroundings."²⁸⁶ and "There are few things that give greater pleasure to the really good housewife than a store cupboard stocked with a large variety of home-made jams and jellies."²⁸⁷ demonstrated to railwaymen's wives where their priorities should lie. This was especially the case in the edition of the LMS Magazine that focused upon the work done by female railway workers. 'A Page for Women' stated that an honourable mention was due to wives and mothers because, "the best workers are those who are the happiest and best looked after in their home lives."²⁸⁸ In this way, the non-working female members of a railwayman's family were contributing to the success of the Company, and the 'railway family', by their efforts at home.

²⁸⁶ LMSM, 15, 11 (1938) p.588

²⁸⁷ LMSM, 16, 7 (1939) p.364

²⁸⁸ LMSM, 16, 4 (1939) p.210

However, it was not just the behaviour of housewives that was commented upon in 'A Page for Women'. Advice and warnings that were more appropriate for young girls, either female railway workers or the daughters of railwaymen, were included in the women's page. An article in 'A Page for Women' in the March 1926 issue was titled 'Does platonic friendship exist?' and warned against pursuing flirtations under the guise of friendship.²⁸⁹ Another bemoaned the fact that the "modern girl" was losing the art of conversation whilst another advised women to moderate their fashionable sensibilities, otherwise they may have to face pressure from many areas to dress more conservatively.²⁹⁰ In this way, female railway workers and the non-working wives and daughters of railwaymen were treated in a similar way to the railwaymen when it came to the advice given to them through the pages of the Magazine. Thus, the LMS was treating all members of the 'railway family' as one; there was no distinction between the railway workers and their non-working family members in the eyes of the LMS, who wanted to ensure that all those associated with the Company were healthy, happy and 'respectable'.

In order to further understand the composition of 'A Page for Women', the articles that appeared on the page during 1927 and 1937 have been broken down and analysed. These two years were chosen because of the relative stability of the railway industry, including few industrial disputes and the threat of international war, although present, was limited and unpopular.²⁹¹ There was an economic depression

²⁸⁹ LMSM, 3, 3 (1926) p.107

²⁹⁰ LMSM, 3 (1926) 5 and 7, p.180 and p.251

²⁹¹ British Library, 'Appeasement',

<http://www.bl.uk/learning/histcitizen/fpage/appeasement/appeasement.html> [03/05/2016] The front page of the *Daily Sketch* from 29th September 1938 describes Neville Chamberlain as heroic for pursuing a policy of appeasement

during the 1920s and 1930s and many of the articles published on 'A Page for Women' reflected this. By 1937 this was easing but many areas of the country, including those that the LMS served, were still facing difficult economic conditions.²⁹² Comparing these two years can illuminate whether 'A Page for Women' changed over the period and how it continued to dispense information and advice to women in the 'railway family'.

²⁹² Stevenson and Cook, *The Slump*, p.76. Special Areas (Amendment) Act, 1937 was utilized to create trading estates in areas where unemployment was still high, for example, trading estates in South Wales, Gateshead and Glasgow employed 5000 people by 1939

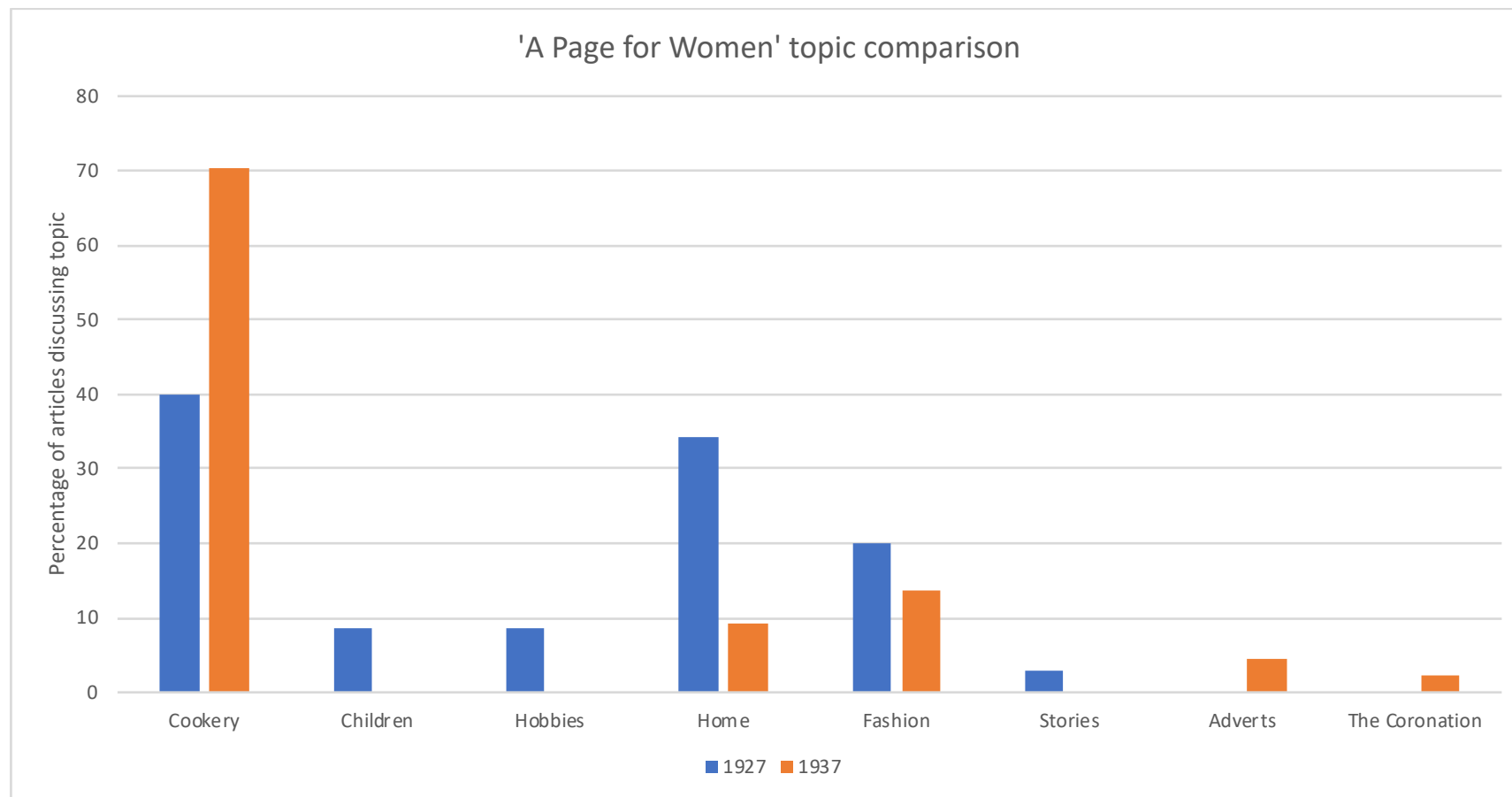


Figure 4. A graph comparing the articles published on 'A Page for Women' in the LMS magazine in 1927 and 1937, held at the National Railway Museum, 1.0320

In order to complete this analysis, each article on the page was counted and divided into the topics that they covered. In 1927, this included articles on cookery, children, hobbies, home and fashion. In 1937, these articles included cookery, home and fashion. In 1927, there were 35 different articles whilst in 1937 there were 43, indicating that the articles published on 'A Page for Women' in 1937 were shorter than those in 1927 as the space given to the women's page did not change. Short "tit-bits" were popular because of the lack of space that the women's pages were afforded within all the railway company magazines in which they appeared, not just within the LMS Magazine. They were also considered easier to read for the busy housewife.²⁹³ There are anomalies in both 1927 and 1937 which appear only once or twice. In 1927, the anomaly was a fictional story which appeared in 'A Page for Women' in December and in 1937, two adverts were included in 'A Page for Women' both of which advertised products for women specifically - insurance on large household goods purchased at a particular store and free gifts from the Co-operative Society. Another anomalous article in 1937 concerned the Coronation of King George VI which was widely celebrated in the LMS Magazine.

The results in Figure 4 show that broadly the same topics were discussed week after week and year after year. Cooking and recipes, fashion and the home were the focus in both 1927 and 1937. These topics were considered particularly appropriate for housewives and offered tips and advice on how to work within a limited budget. This was a particularly strong theme throughout the articles published on 'A Page for Women' during 1927 because of the economic depression affecting the railway

²⁹³ Beetham and Boardman, *Victorian Women's Magazines*, p.117

industry and the country more generally. These articles focused on how to cook nutritious meals, how to dress well and make your own clothes and how to make the most of one's home with a reduced income. A number of articles also included advice on how to raise children and appropriate hobbies and pastimes for women and families including aspirational ideas such as days out in a motor car and holidays. In contrast, the large majority of articles published in 'A Page for Women' in 1937 were about food, including advice on what to cook and how to cook it. There were fewer budgetary restrictions for many railwaymen's wives during this period and many of the recipes focused on using fresh fruit, vegetables and meat that was freely available and in season. It was during this period that the idea that cooking could also be a hobby emerged. Therefore, the women's page was not only providing wives with healthy and nutritious recipes that they could cook for their families but also new and exciting recipes for them to experiment with as part of their leisure time.²⁹⁴ The two different Editors of 'A Page for Women' during these years (Vera Webster in 1927 and Agnes Neville in 1937) may have been the driving factor in the change of focus that appeared between 1927 and 1937, with Neville choosing to use the page to impart mainly recipes and household hints rather than discussing children, holidays or hobbies.

There was very little emphasis on the lives of women outside the home or on working women; instead the main thrust of the articles was concerned with how to take care of oneself and one's home, ostensibly for a woman's own benefit and that of her husband. In this way, although the number of articles that concerned cookery

²⁹⁴ Colquhoun, Kate, *Taste. The Story of Britain through its Cooking* (Bloomsbury Publishing, London, 2007) pp.332-337. Colquhoun describes the ways in which women's magazines provided recipes for women eager to impress with their cooking ability and willingness to experiment.

increased and the number of articles about children or hobbies decreased, there was very little difference in the focus of the articles that appeared on 'A Page for Women' in 1927 to 1937. Their primary audience was the railwayman's wife and in this way the aim of 'A Page for Women', to bring mothers, wives and daughters into the idea of the 'railway family' through the magazine was met. Railway companies were less concerned about targeting women working in the railway industry through the magazine instead choosing to induct them into the idea of the 'railway family' once they commenced their service with the company.

3.4.2 Other railway company women's pages

The 'Woman's Page' of the Great Eastern Railway (GER) Company magazine used similar language to target all women connected to the railway industry, "Whether we are the wives and daughters of men employed on the railway, or whether we ourselves are employees of the Company, we shall all, I hope, have an opportunity of reading the magazine, and thus be enabled to take an intelligent interest in the working of the huge concern from which we derive our daily bread"²⁹⁵. The original aim of the GER 'Woman's Page' was to encourage women connected with the railway industry to educate themselves about how the railways, and in particular the GER, worked. In this way, the GER were drawing women into the 'railway family' by actively involving them in the different aspects of the railway industry through their women's page. In reality however, the overall focus of the 'Woman's Page' did not meet the original aims of the page, focusing on the more traditional topics that women's magazines and many of the

²⁹⁵ Great Eastern Railway Company Magazine (GERM), 1, 1 (1911) p.19

other railway company magazine women's pages discussed including fashion, food, children and the home. These were all considered appropriate subjects for women but were often intermingled with advice that was targeted specifically towards members of the 'railway family'. One issue commented that "The strides that women are making is evidenced by the space devoted entirely to things feminine in many of the great London dailies...We are a sex to be catered for, and the demand has created a supply."²⁹⁶ The progress of women was judged by the Editor of the page to be due to their consideration as influential consumers, an important new distinction but one that had little effect on educating women about the GER or the railway industry in general.

There were a small number of articles on the 'Woman's Page' that concerned working women before the First World War, but described these women in a way that suggested they were working because they had to rather than because they wanted to, for example many of the women who worked in the GER carriage shops were described as the orphans of company employees.²⁹⁷ Working in the carriage shop, upholstering carriage seats and making luggage netting was considered an appropriately feminine role and was one of the only areas where women were employed in manual labour on the railways. However, the employment of widows and orphans also painted the company in a positive light as they offered jobs to those in need, who were connected to the company through the 'railway family'. Only a few years after the 'Woman's Page' had begun, women workers were already being side-lined, for example, the Editor congratulated the women reading the page on being connected to the GER "through

²⁹⁶ GERM, 2, 15 (1912) p.80

²⁹⁷ GERM, 1, 9 (1911) p.280

our fathers, brothers, sweethearts or husbands” missing out those women who worked for the GER entirely.²⁹⁸

The ‘Woman’s Page’ in the GER magazine developed over time adding different sections to appeal to a variety of female audiences. A letters page began in December 1913 encouraging readers to write in and offering advice on “women and women’s work”, primarily household queries.²⁹⁹ Dressmaking ideas and illustrations were included which added to the aesthetics of the page and ensured they were attractive to women skimming through the magazine. Figure 5 is an example of a page from the GER ‘Woman’s Page’, with photographs and illustrations of women’s and children’s clothing.

²⁹⁸ GERM, 2, 21 (1912) p.298

²⁹⁹ GERM, 3, 36 (1913) p.414

WOMAN'S PAGE.

Smocking for Summer Frocks.

Now that trimmings are scarce and expensive the possibilities of the self-trimmed dress are worth considering. The old art of smocking has never "gone out" because it has always been in favour

Colouring was somewhat local. Thus white smocks prevailed round London; the "Newark" blue in Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Warwickshire and Staffordshire; black in Surrey; drab or grey in Sussex and olive-green in Herts. Some of the most elaborate patterns came from Essex, and in Dorsetshire the smocks were often worked in two colours. Designs were handed down from mother to daughter. Tradition says that the "wheel" pattern belonged to the carter's smock, the rosette ones to the gardener's and the branching and leafy ones, like the Sussex ones of the picture, to the woodman. Only



A SUSSEX SMOCK

(Reproduced by kind permission of the Director of the Victoria and Albert Museum).

for children's frocks, but it is long since it was employed for grown-ups' dresses. Unfortunately the picturesque days of the countryman's "smock-frock" are over. No longer do we see the village bridegroom repair to the church in breeches, gaiters, knotted neckerchief, tall felt hat, and last, but not least, the fine new smock worked by the maid he is about to marry. It will serve him for Sunday best and every festive occasion for the rest of his life, and probably pass on to his son, whose best girl will work one for him too.

Where the idea of the work came from no one seems to know; but the art of smocking is fairly ancient, for it was practised in the thirteenth century. At that time girls and women wore "smocs" or "smickets," which were then made of fine linen and embroidered elaborately with gold thread and coloured silks. The word "smock" is Anglo-Saxon and means "a garment to creep into." So even then it may have been without fastening and simply drawn over the head. In Queen Anne's reign, at a yearly fair usually held in the locality now known as "Mayfair,"

Smock Races

were among the principal amusements. Young girls would compete arrayed in their smocks, and the prize-winners were each presented with a fine new embroidered smock. None of these garments seems to have been preserved. The only specimens we possess are those of farmers and other countrymen of the early nineteenth century. Strange to say, smocks were not worn farther north than Lincolnshire and Shropshire, or farther west than Devon.

Ordinary Sewing Stitches, such as chain, feather and button-hole, were used to make the decoration, together with such smocking stitches as may be seen in the Sussex specimen—outline, diamond and rope, with a row of basket at the bottom. "A" shows a basqued blouse of charmeuse, ninon, crepe-de-chine or taffeta, decorated with these simple stitches; and "B" is another, of delaine, cashmere, muslin or cotton.

The Ordinary Necessities of Life claim most of our attention now, and new foods made from recently unthought-of materials tax our ingenuity. Mangel-wurzel is found to be a delightful vegetable which can be made up in endless tasty combinations; and doubtless we shall be glad to eke out our store by means of the ordinary and commonly despised "herbs of the field."



FIG. A.



FIG. B.

The Common Dandelion (*Leontodon Taraxacum*) is splendid for salad in place of lettuce. The young leaves only should be used. From the root, dried and roasted, a drink resembling coffee can be made.

J.C.R.

Figure 5. An example of the 'Woman's Page' from the GER magazine, 7, 77 (1917) p.119, National Railway Museum, York. 1.0250

Female workers also became a focus during the First World War, primarily due to the greater numbers of women who were employed by the Great Eastern Railway Company and were therefore taking the magazine home with them. There were a number of segments that discussed clothes for female workers, a Knitting Association that was organised for women workers via the Magazine and the promotion of the Railway Women's Convalescent Home in Lavenham which opened just before the start of the First World War and housed seventy Great Eastern women by 1920.³⁰⁰ The emphasis of the page still predominantly remained on domestic matters during the war, encouraging women to stay calm and to be economical in every endeavour, with sweet and savoury recipes, practical and everyday dressmaking tips and household hints providing ideas on the best way to run a railwayman's home with limited money and supplies. Examples include advice on the appropriate colours to wear, "Economy and considerations of a more serious nature dictate simplicity in dress this winter. The black and white of grown-up dress is changed for the national colours for children."³⁰¹ Economy in the kitchen was also expounded, "At home we can very well do with less luxury and an Eccles Cake is as good as another just now."³⁰² Cleaning and household chores were a concern, but the Editor of the 'Woman's Page' was aware that many women did not have the time during the war to attend to these duties in the same way as they had previously done therefore, "It is of national importance to be clean. This does not mean that the cleansing of bric-a-brac, the washing of unneeded draperies,

³⁰⁰ GERM, 6, 62 (1916) p.51, 8, 85 (1918) p.10, 6, 68 (1916) p.204 and 10, 110 (1920) p.23

³⁰¹ GERM, 4, 47 (1914) p.376

³⁰² GERM, 4, 48 (1914) p.405

and repainting of interiors is of national importance. We have to reconcile these facts: we must be clean, and we must reduce the labour of our households to a minimum.”³⁰³

After the end of the war, the main focus of the ‘Woman’s Page’ remained on domestic matters but it did acknowledge the greater freedoms in work and lifestyle that women were enjoying, for example, the number of ‘men’s jobs’ women had done during the war demonstrated their ability to perform in new environments and under pressure.³⁰⁴ The Editor also criticised those who tried to force women to wear more feminine clothes or behave in a certain way in the new climate of women’s independence in the post-war period.³⁰⁵ The Page reflected the opinions of the Editor and it is interesting to note that whilst the tone of the ‘Woman’s Page’ did change when a new Editor was appointed it still espoused the prevalent ideology of the male breadwinner. One of the reasons for this was that when they advertised for a new Editor for the ‘Woman’s Page’ the request was for a wife or daughter of a railwayman rather than a GER female employee.³⁰⁶ In this way, their values and beliefs as non-working women and the wives of railwaymen became the focus of the page as the Editor had control of the content and tone. Working women were side-lined and excluded from much of the content of the women’s pages in both the LMS and the GER company magazines, contrary to the original aims of the pages.

This tendency, however, was in stark contrast to the women’s page, ‘Tea Table Topics’ in the London and North Western Railway Company (LNWR) magazine. The LNWR magazine began in 1912 as the social arm of the London branch of the Athletics

³⁰³ GERM, 8, 89 (1918) p.91

³⁰⁴ GERM, 8, 95 (1918) p.211

³⁰⁵ GERM, 10, 111 (1920) p.43

³⁰⁶ GERM, 2, 14 (1912) p.47

Club. It was so successful that it was extended to the whole of the line in 1913. The aim of the Magazine was stated as, “to interest each other in all our doings, whether at work or play, gathering together the threads of casual intercourse and weaving them into a bond of mutual understanding and appreciation, for even if we are scattered over a large area and our individual concerns are naturally numerous and varied, yet there is much we have in common.”³⁰⁷ In a similar way to all other railway company magazines, the purpose of the magazine was to create an ‘esprit de corps’ between all staff across the large geographical area that the LNWR covered. Education was also a priority for the magazine, and articles were published which educated staff on the history of the company and the methods that were used in day-to-day work in all departments across the line.

Of the women’s pages that appeared in the railway company magazines this was by far the most overtly political, in direct contrast to the title of that page. Subjects that were covered included traditional domestic topics like dress and childcare, but also working women, both single and married, and a woman’s right to vote. One of the reasons for this was the period between 1913 and 1922 in which ‘Tea Table Topics’ was written. The campaign for women to have the right to vote, as well as other social and political freedoms, was gathering pace and incremental gains were made during this period. Although the campaigning was shelved during the First World War, women moved into a more public arena in local politics and in the workforce. Many women, including those within the Railway Women’s Guild, advocated for their right to be involved in these campaigns on the basis of ‘separate spheres’. This argument

³⁰⁷ LNWG, 2, 5 (1913) p.3

proposed that women had the right to concern themselves with topics that affected other women and children and thus did not need to trespass on the political territory of men.³⁰⁸

The first 'Tea Table Topics', written by Gertrude Webb, was published in January 1913 and continued until the LNWR was amalgamated into the LMS in 1923. Each week, one topic was covered in the column; these included household tips, fashion advice and guidance on lifestyle for both working and married women. Again, this was unusual compared to other women's pages, which focused their thoughts and advice primarily towards railwaymen's wives. 'Tea Table Topics' ran during a period where a large number of women began working in the railway industry, even if only temporarily due to the War. In this way, the column was used to encourage both working women and housewives to connect with the idea of the 'railway family' through the magazine. However, many of the articles that referenced working women often did this under the guise of advice to mothers, always speaking of working women as 'girls', for example in an article that advocated the benefit of exercise for female workers.³⁰⁹ The only instances where working women were not referred to as 'girls' was in discussions of married women working during the First World War and in a unique article in 1920 entitled, 'Should Married Women Work?'. The article adopted the attitude that as long as a married woman could balance her home, husband and questions of taking work from single girls and ex-servicemen then she was free to take paid work as she pleased.³¹⁰ Whilst not espousing a wholehearted acceptance of

³⁰⁸ Hollis, Patricia, 'Women in Council: Separate Spheres, Public Space' in Rendall, Jane (ed.) *Equal or Different: Women's Politics 1800 - 1914* (Basil Blackwell Ltd, Oxford, 1987) p.208

³⁰⁹ LNWG, 2, 8 (1913) p. 124

³¹⁰ LNWG, 9, 98 (1920) p.216

married women's paid work, 'Tea Table Topics' was more open to the possibility than the women's pages in other railway company magazines.

Suffrage was a topic that was discussed in 'Tea Table Topics' throughout its duration, beginning in 1913 with an article entitled 'Why I am a Suffragette' in which Gertrude Webb argued that women had proven themselves at home and in work despite tough challenges, which qualified them to vote. In particular, women needed to be involved in creating legislation that affected themselves and their children especially concerning education, food and housing. In effect, this was encouraging the 'separate spheres' argument concerning women and their entry into politics. The idea that men were disproportionately concerned with national defence was countered by the author stating that women bore children, so both sexes were concerned with issues that the other had no idea about. Finally, Webb argued that the vast majority of suffragettes were not 'anti-man', attempting to allay the fears of railwaymen and their wives regarding militant suffragettes and those agitating for women to have the right to vote.³¹¹ Once politicians were discussing the possibility of women being granted the right to vote, Gertrude Webb again commented on women's suffrage that, "Men in high places are considering woman suffrage because they say that women have worked out their own salvation. It is not only that, you wise men. The women were ready for the vote, or anything else, long before the war. They only needed the opportunity."³¹² In February 1918, the Representation of the People Act granted many, but not all, women the right to vote. Once women had been officially granted this right, 'Tea Table Topics'

³¹¹ LN WG, 2, 11 (1913) p. 212

³¹² LN WG, 6, 57 (1917) p.121

continued to exhort women to use their vote wisely particularly in the sphere of housing policy and education.³¹³

Gertrude Webb was unafraid of writing on controversial topics such as working married women and suffrage as well as wages for wives, the need for girls to have business ambitions and a number of critiques of popular attitudes about fashion, child-rearing and the place of women within the home.³¹⁴ It was unusual to see these ideas, whilst not overly radical, in the pages of a railway company magazine. One of the reasons for this may be the tradition of political radicalism and non-conformism that existed on the LNWR and was particularly visible at Crewe for a number of years.³¹⁵ Also, these more political columns were always couched in terms that were familiar to railwaymen and their wives and surrounded by articles in the magazine and other ‘Tea Table Topics’ columns, which reaffirmed the status quo and were not overtly challenging to railwaymen who might chance to read the page. The fact that railwaymen did not write to the magazine to complain about the topics discussed on the Women’s Page, which did occur with discussions on female railway workers, signifies their acceptance or at least their lack of concern.

3.5 Children’s Pages

The children of railwaymen were considered by railway companies to be future employees therefore it was important to nurture them through the pages of the

³¹³ LNWG, 7, 68 (1918) p. 93 and LNWG, 8, 77 (1919) p. 14

³¹⁴ LNWG, 2, 6 (1913) p. 63, 2, 9 (1913) p. 155, 10, 102 (1921) p. 38, 9, 95 (1920) p. 151 and 8, 83 (1919) p. 134

³¹⁵ Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, p.91. Drummond discusses the non-conformism and the political views of many of the railwaymen in Crewe, which were used as a strategy to resist the paternalistic practices of the Company.

magazine and draw them into the idea of the 'railway family' early on. To this end, children's pages were a feature of a number of railway company magazines throughout this period. These children's pages featured stories and cartoons that were intended to teach children about life on the railways and the world in general. In a similar way to the children's literature discussed in Maureen Nimon's study of Sunday school magazines, the children's pages of the railway company magazines promoted the "ideological curriculum" of the respective institutions including their "code of values and behaviour" which were particularly important in the training of future railwaymen and women.³¹⁶

The railway company children's pages often contained stories which related to the situations children found themselves in at home or at school and contained guidance that was framed in moralistic terms.³¹⁷ An example of this can be seen in the LMS children's page which in January 1926 featured two stories encouraging children not to be gluttonous and to be polite to everyone they encountered in their daily life.³¹⁸ An article written in 1943 in *The Elementary English Review* stated that children preferred comic books because they featured "action, color, suspense, pictorial appeal, and drama".³¹⁹ Some of the children's pages in the railway company magazines contained small comic strips designed to attract children to the Page and make the

³¹⁶ Nimon, Maureen, 'From Faith to Good Fellowship: Sunday School Magazines in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Children's Literature in Education*, 19, 4 (1988) p.242

³¹⁷ Noakes, Richard, 'The *Boys Own Paper* and late-Victorian juvenile magazines' in Cantor, G., Dawson, G., Gooday, G., Noakes, R., Shuttleworth, S. and Topham, J.R., *Science in the nineteenth-century periodical: reading the magazine of nature Cambridge* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004) p.151

³¹⁸ LMSM, 3, 1 (1926) p.32

³¹⁹ Amar, Wesley Francis, 'Children's Magazines Today', *The Elementary English Review*, 20, 7 (1943) p.287

messages they contained easy to understand. The LMS magazine contained a recurring cartoon strip about a cat called 'Westy'.³²⁰

The Great Central Railway (GCR) Company magazine introduced their short-lived Children's Page in July 1905. It was edited by 'Auntie Agnes' who, in the form of a letter to the children of GCR railwaymen, encouraged them to read the magazine, to work hard at school and to undertake appropriate hobbies that would broaden their horizons. The aim of the children's page was to draw children into the idea of the 'railway family' and encourage them to be loyal to the Company by portraying it in a positive light. Not only did the page demonstrate to children that the Company was prepared to provide something for them, it also proved to their parents that their offspring were part of the 'railway family'. As the Editor wrote, "one page of a journal taken by every Great Central man should be devoted to future railwaymen and their wives" making it clear that the GCR believed the children of their railwaymen would grow up to become railwaymen or the wives of railwaymen themselves.³²¹ If the company could encourage children to become obedient, well-educated and have a range of appropriate hobbies, they were moulding future railwaymen into their ideal candidates.

The GCR Magazine's children's page was discontinued in October of the same year but a children's portrait gallery was still included that featured photographs of the children of railwaymen. 'Auntie Agnes' also continued to write letters to the magazine for another few years, detailing stories of her travels around the globe until this was eventually phased out. 'Auntie Agnes' visited America, Mexico, Canada,

³²⁰ LMSM, 5, 1 (1928) p.27

³²¹ Great Central Railway Company Magazine (GCRM), 1, 2 (1905) p.31

Germany and Hungary and the letters she wrote were very educational in their tone, encouraging children to learn about other cultures, languages and the environment. This section was discontinued in December 1906 and a number of railwaymen wrote into the GCR magazine complaining that both they and their children had enjoyed reading the letters and stories from 'Auntie Agnes'.³²²

The Children's Page and the letters from 'Auntie Agnes' were highly gendered, demonstrating what was considered appropriate for young boys and girls; for example, during summer 'Auntie Agnes' suggested that girls should help their mothers make jam whilst boys should help with the hay-making (despite the fact that many of the children of railwaymen lived in inner city areas).³²³ This Children's Page, notwithstanding the supportive letters and comments about it in the magazine, did not exist for very long suggesting that the GCR did not see a value in it, or in the themes of global diversity espoused in 'Auntie Agnes' letters, and preferred to use the space within the magazine to target a more receptive and easy to reach audience with a less equivocal message.

The Great Eastern Railway (GER) Company magazine also included a small section for children that was embedded within its women's page from January 1914. This indicates that women and children, the non-working element of the idea of the 'railway family', were considered by the GER very much in the same vein. 'Chats with the Children' featured intermittently and often focussed on educational activities such as making a pin organ or games and activities that would amuse them, for example making a chest of drawers for their doll's clothes.³²⁴ Many of these practical activities

³²² GCRM, 2, 6 (1906) p.163

³²³ GCRM, 1, 2 (1905) p.38

³²⁴ GERM 4, 37 (1914) p.28 and 4, 39 (1914) p.90

were aimed at girls because they focused on sewing and other handicrafts that young girls were often taught by their mothers.³²⁵ In this way, the GER children's page was gendered towards a female audience because of the content of the column and its situation on the women's page.

In a similar way to the GCR magazine's children's page, 'Aunt Alice' began writing to the children of GER railwaymen from February 1914 about educational topics, particularly nature and the environment.³²⁶ Stories were also included in 'Chats with Children' to entertain and amuse them.³²⁷ The outbreak of the First World War curtailed 'Chats with Children' from June 1915 and then it did not reappear, even after the end of the war. Hints and tips about child care and activities for children continued to appear on the page but they were targeted towards mothers. This children's page was also short-lived, indicating that railway companies struggled to connect with children through their magazine. Space within the magazine was at a premium and competition was high – if the Editors of the magazine could not see a strategic value in the page, it is unsurprising that it did not last very long.

The LNWR magazine began a children's page in 1920 entitled 'Candle Time'. This page was introduced with very little fanfare and the only indication that it was designed for children was the small drawing that appeared alongside the heading, of two children dressed in pyjamas climbing the stairs with a candle. This page was slightly different to many of the other children's pages in the company magazines as it did not address the children directly, instead it provided them with stories and poems

³²⁵ GERM, 5, 54 (1915) p.187

³²⁶ GERM, 4, 38 (1914) p.58 and 4, 44 (1914) p.273

³²⁷ GERM, 4, 48 (1914) p.406

to read, ostensibly at bedtime. These stories were moral tales; however, they were gently told and the morals were not forced upon the children by an 'Aunt' or an 'Uncle' as in the other company magazines children's pages. The first story in 'Candle Time' featured a Prince who fell in love with the daughter of a poor villager and was determined to marry her despite opposition from his mother and an arranged marriage with another Princess.³²⁸ The next edition of the *Gazette* contained another story with a moral element; this story was about a young girl who had to help with housework and take care of her baby brothers. She wished for a fairy godmother to turn her into a neighbouring girl, who was much richer and never had to do any work. When this came true, she soon realised that the other girl's life was not what she had imagined, "Nobody wanted her – the babies, the nurse, or the maid." She then wished for the fairy godmother to turn her back and said, "'I shall never want to be Betty any more.'"³²⁹ These stories continued throughout the remaining three years that the LNWR *Gazette* was published. Each week it appeared next to 'Tea Table Topics', the LNWR page for women, indicating that their provision for members of the 'railway family' outside of their direct employees was clustered together across the two pages only. The stories were aimed at both boys and girls as they contained both male and female protagonists, varying from princes and princesses to working-class girls and boys.³³⁰ Although these stories were directed at children, whether for them to read themselves or for their parents to read to them, the morals that they contained were

³²⁸ LNWG, 9, 89 (1920) p.13

³²⁹ LNWG, 9, 90 (1920) p.34

³³⁰ LNWG, 10, 106 (1921) p.134 and 10, 111 (1921) p.249

also relevant for adults, for example, “sympathy and kindness are jewels which never lose their value.”³³¹

The only other railway company magazine to offer a page for children was the LMS Magazine. This page began in January 1925 and continued throughout the life of the magazine. The children’s page was targeted at children under the age of fourteen and was intended to introduce them to the way that the railway industry worked and was run as well as being educational and fun.³³² Those over fourteen years old were the target audience for the Juniors Page, which was aimed at those considered old enough to be working, primarily for the Company. The LMS children’s page was also used as an incentive to encourage fathers to bring the magazine home for their children to read, thus increasing the circulation of the magazine and this was stated openly when the page was first introduced.³³³ This also drew children into the ‘railway family’ through their working family members.

In contrast to the children’s pages in the Great Central and Great Eastern railway company magazines, the LMS children’s page was edited by ‘Uncle’ which gave the page a slightly different gendered appeal. Each week he wrote letters to the children filled with interesting information and stories which, although they were not always related to the railway industry, did always contain a moral or educational element. Competitions also encouraged the children to keep reading the page and enhanced reader loyalty, preventing it from being removed or minimised as the other examples of children’s pages were.³³⁴ Almost four hundred children entered one of the

³³¹ LN WG, 9, 97 (1920) p.195

³³² LMSM, 2, 1 (1925) p.22

³³³ Ibid., p.22

³³⁴ Beetham and Boardman, *Victorian Women’s Magazines*, p.190

first colouring competitions on the page, demonstrating both the large circulation that the magazine had, the number of children it had the potential to reach and just how immediately popular the LMS children's page was.³³⁵

The LMS children's page also sought to mould the children of railwaymen into ideal company employees from an early age. They clearly saw this as an important function of their magazine; other railway company children's pages ran for a short amount of time before being sacrificed for other content but the LMS included a children's page in almost every edition of their magazine. Moral and educational advice were particularly key messages and included: how to help someone who has fainted, a story about the pitfalls of playing truant from school and an article on the origins of May Day.³³⁶ One letter written by 'Uncle' discussed appropriate hobbies for winter, which included needlework for girls and woodwork or stamp collecting for boys.³³⁷ These gendered hobbies aimed to teach children valuable skills that would come in particularly useful for future railwaymen or future railwaymen's wives. The varied ways that this advice was given, in the form of an article, letter, cartoon or story, helped to keep children interested in the page and take on board the advice that was being given. By moulding the children of railwaymen into future railway workers or railwaymen's wives, the LMS magazine was acting as a way to draw children into the idea of the 'railway family' from a young age and to create the kind of workers that they wanted within their version of the ideal 'railway family'.

³³⁵ LMSM, 2, 3 (1925) p.100

³³⁶ LMSM, 4, 2 (1927) p.62, LMSM, 4, 7 (1927) p.249 and LMSM, 11, 5 (1934) p.192

³³⁷ LMSM, 2, 11 (1925) p.394

3.6 Company welfare for the 'railway family'

The first Editor of the Great Western Magazine, Felix Pole, wanted to use the magazine to ensure those who worked for the Company, and by extension their families, "realise their welfare was bound up in the success of the company."³³⁸ By doing this, Pole was reinforcing the idea that the Company and its employees had mutual interests. Such interests also extended to the non-working family members of railwaymen and hence played into the idea of the 'railway family'. The Great Western Railway Company assisted railwaymen and their families in building housing estates, creating a community of railway workers and further enhancing the idea of the 'railway family' as one that was supported by the Company. This began in August 1923 when the GWR announced a scheme to assist railwaymen with house building projects. The Company supported the formation of Public Utility Housing Societies and the land and capital for the housing projects was loaned to these societies by the Company and then repaid over time.³³⁹ A number of Public Utility Societies were formed, most notably with the creation of the Great Western Garden Village at Acton.³⁴⁰ The plans for the Acton Garden Village initially comprised of thirty 'Class A' houses with a living room, scullery, bathroom and three bedrooms and twenty 'Class B' houses with a living room, parlour, scullery, three bedrooms and an upstairs bathroom. However, the GWR estimated that four hundred and ninety-six houses could be built on the Acton site. All these houses were to be semi-detached and connected to both electricity and gas.³⁴¹ By 1931, seven hundred and sixty-two houses had been built at the Acton site, along with

³³⁸ Thompson, 'A Master Whose Heart is in the Land' p. 357

³³⁹ GWRM, 35, 8 (1923) p. 360

³⁴⁰ GWRM, 36, 5 (1924) p. 172

³⁴¹ GWRM, 35, 8 (1923) p.363

shops and other facilities.³⁴² The schemes were open to all company employees and land was also sold to other Public Utility Societies or private contractors with the agreement that houses and flats be provided for GWR employees and their families (although not solely for railwaymen), most notably with the early developments at Barry and Exeter and then others across London and the South-West including Paddington, Ealing, Bristol, Gloucester and Weston-super-Mare.³⁴³

In January 1926 the extension to the Barry Garden Suburb, which comprised 212 houses for GWR staff, was opened.³⁴⁴ By January 1935 the Company announced that they had helped the Public Utility Societies build over 1,500 houses and, in a separate scheme, had provided 3,400 mortgages to staff to enable them to buy their own homes.³⁴⁵ This scheme saw the GWR lend staff members up to 90% of the cost of their house (up to £1000) which was then repaid with 5% interest over no more than twenty years through paybill deductions.³⁴⁶ Company welfare such as housing strengthened the idea of the 'railway family' and the impression that managers, employees and their non-working family members were 'all in it together'. Housing was particularly important for the 'railway family', as poor and inadequate housing could affect the health and welfare of a railwayman, his wife and children. Therefore, by helping their employees secure appropriate housing the GWR were cementing the loyalty that railwaymen and their families felt towards the Company.

Like the GWR Magazine, the LMS Magazine was also used to emphasise the need for mutual co-operation between the staff and the directors and management of the

³⁴² GWRM, 43, 10 (1931) p.433

³⁴³ GWRM, 43, 10 (1931) p.433 and 47, 1 (1935) p.25

³⁴⁴ GWRM, 39, 1 (1926) p. 21

³⁴⁵ GWRM, 47, 1 (1935) p. 25.

³⁴⁶ GWRM, 35, 1 (1923) p.2

Company. In contrast to the more paternalistic methods of the GWR, the LMS emphasised from the outset that industrial welfare was the way that the staff and the railway company were going to benefit: "Welfare seeks to humanise industry; to create esprit de corps; and thus secure a happy and more efficient staff. I believe Welfare work to be of benefit to employer and employed alike..."³⁴⁷ A series of articles over the following months described the industrial welfare that LMS employees could expect and what was expected of them in return. This was a very important point for the LMS to stress: that railwaymen and their families were expected to contribute towards the Company in return for the industrial welfare which they received. The Company was keen to emphasise, following a letter from a railwayman, that although industrial welfare was being instituted from an economic and an ethical point of view, the Company's stance was "predominantly ethical"³⁴⁸. The LMS Magazine was an excellent vehicle for dispensing the idea of industrial welfare and it was explained in a clear and obvious way by the Editors and authors. As so many of the staff were familiar with different paternalistic practices before their amalgamation under the LMS umbrella, the Company had to clearly define to all staff what their policies and priorities were.

In order to effectively communicate the welfare that the LMS was going to offer to railwaymen and their families, the articles in the Magazine set out the idea plainly and simply. 'Welfare and the LMS' constituted a series of nine articles including 'Health', 'On Being Happy' and 'Feeding the Railwaymen' which identified how the LMS would achieve these aims and what was expected of railwaymen in return. For example it was important to prevent accidents "for our own sakes, for the sake of our families

³⁴⁷ LMSM, 1, 1 (1923) p.5

³⁴⁸ LMSM, 1, 2 (1923) p.54

and friends, for the sake of our Company and our nation”³⁴⁹ and the LMS wanted to give their employees ‘True Democracy’ which “demands co-operation and the sharing of responsibilities as well as the sharing of privileges and rights.”³⁵⁰ In this way, the LMS continued to use the language of the ‘railway family’ as a way to offer welfare and encourage loyalty and co-operation but there was also an increased focus on the responsibilities of the individual employee and their relatives who were not employees.

The welfare of the families of railwaymen was also central to railway company policy during the First and Second World War. The GER Magazine contained an announcement in September 1914, on the outbreak of the First World War, that the wives and families of railwaymen who joined the Services would be paid allowances by the Company.³⁵¹ The Company also wanted to ensure that the dependents of serving railwaymen were not allowed to “get out of touch with the railway” during the war.³⁵² Railway companies also encouraged their employees to set up funds that supported serving soldiers and their families. The companies contributed to these organizationally and monetarily because, “our fund has been the means of keeping the homes together.”³⁵³

The LSWR Gazette praised its readers from across the Company for raising money for a number of general war time funds, for example the Prince of Wales Fund which was designed to provide assistance for all soldiers’ families in distress.³⁵⁴ Other

³⁴⁹ LMSM, 1, 10 (1923) p.347

³⁵⁰ LMSM, 1, 11 (1923) p.388

³⁵¹ GERM, 4, 45 (1914) p.285

³⁵² GERM, 8, 87 (1918) p.47

³⁵³ LN WG, 4, 30 (1915) p.54

³⁵⁴ LSWG, 01/11/1914, p.8

districts, stations and sheds were congratulated individually for the amounts they raised, including the Western District which donated £900 to a variety of causes including those for all serving soldiers families and included widows whose “railways sons” had enlisted and the wife of a railwayman who had been invalided home.³⁵⁵ This encouragement from the pages of the magazines demonstrated to railwaymen that they needed to support the extended ‘railway family’ in a time of great need and in return they could earn recognition from their Company and praise from others for “doing their bit” whilst remaining on the Home Front.³⁵⁶ Company officials were also applauded in the pages of the LSWR Gazette for supporting the idea of the ‘railway family’ during wartime as the management and officials at Eastleigh raised money and organised, with help from the railwaymen at the Carriage Works, a Christmas party for four hundred children of railwaymen who had volunteered to serve in the armed forces.³⁵⁷ In this way, the magazine was able to demonstrate that Company officials were also playing their part in the wartime effort of supporting the ‘railway family’.

3.7 Women workers, railway companies and the ‘railway family’

One of the most contentious issues that had the potential to cause divisions amongst the ‘railway family’ was the employment of women on the railways. Although women were employed before the First World War, it was their entry in much larger numbers from 1914 that caused the most friction. As discussed above, female workers were often excluded from the women’s pages of the company magazines that primarily

³⁵⁵ LSWG, 01/10/1916, p.1

³⁵⁶ LSWG, 01/11/1916, p.282

³⁵⁷ LSWG, 01/02/1915

targeted the wives of railwaymen as a way to draw them into the 'railway family'. It was only when some of those wives became railway workers themselves during the First and Second World Wars that the women's pages included any information for female railway workers. However, these pages were not the primary way that women workers were drawn into the idea of the 'railway family' from the company perspective. From the point of view of many railwaymen, the status assigned to a female employee as a worker for the Company was also not enough on its own to allow for her inclusion into the 'railway family'. The railway companies had to use a variety of different tactics to allow for the inclusion of female railway workers into the idea of the 'railway family'.

The introduction of female workers into the railway industry was an issue for the GWR and it is possible to see how the Company approached this potential disruption through the pages of their magazine. Although women were employed in the railway industry before 1914, their numbers were small and their employment was in roles that were deemed to be suitable for women. The GWR began employing female clerks in 1909 and this was introduced to staff through an article in the GWR Magazine entitled 'Employment of Women Telegraph Operators'. These women were employed in offices at Paddington and Bristol after passing out of the training school. Initially, nineteen women and two female supervisors were employed over the two sites and the article announced that this would be an experiment.³⁵⁸ The experiment continued and was expanded; the employment of female clerks became more commonplace in the railway industry. The First World War caused a large increase in the number of

³⁵⁸ GWRM, 21, 7 (1909) p. 162

female clerks because thousands of clerks joined up to fight and women had demonstrated before the war that they were suitable replacements. By August 1918, 2,905 women were employed as clerks by the GWR.³⁵⁹ Some historians have termed this period the “feminization” of certain white-collar employments.³⁶⁰ In this way, railway companies were no different to other employers when it came to the increasing use of women within their clerical offices.

This issue demonstrates how the GWR used their Magazine to diffuse a potentially challenging situation for the Company. This response also fits with Divall’s theory that companies needed to allow their employees to express dissatisfaction in the Magazine in order that it was not viewed purely as Company propaganda.³⁶¹ Female workers were praised and criticised in almost equal measure in the GWR Magazine during the war and were given the chance to respond for themselves. In May 1915 the GWR published a letter from an unemployed woman asking the Company to employ her as a ticket collector because, “It struck me that a woman could be a “ticket collector” just as well as a man.”³⁶² The GWR employed her as their first female ticket collector and justified the employment of female workers in positions not usually open to them because of the severe shortage of male staff and the desire of women “...to do all in their power to release men for military service...”³⁶³ Photographs of them were consistently featured in the Magazine demonstrating the able work they were performing and reports on their satisfactory work were also included within the

³⁵⁹ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p. 109

³⁶⁰ Thom, Deborah, “Women and Work in Wartime Britain” in Wall, R. and Winter, J. (eds) *The Upheaval of War: Family, Work and welfare in Europe, 1914 – 1918* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1988) p. 302

³⁶¹ Divall, ‘Civilising Velocity’ p. 169

³⁶² GWRM, 27, 5 (1915) p. 120

³⁶³ Ibid., p. 120

Magazine, notably a GWR Special Constable at Paddington, “The employment of a lady in this capacity has been notably satisfactory, particularly in many important matters requiring delicate and tactful investigation.”³⁶⁴

Women in manual grades faced less criticism than female clerks. These women may have been the wives or daughters of GWR railwaymen serving in the Forces and therefore already known to some of the staff they were working with. According to Wojtczak, the GWR gave “preference” in employment to war widows who were unable to support their families on the Government allowance.³⁶⁵ This was one of the ways that the idea of the ‘railway family’ was utilised and may have made working widows immune to the criticism faced by unmarried female clerks. However, as these clerks were also recruited from the families of GWR employees this argument is less convincing. What may have been more important was the fact that the National Union of Railwaymen had negotiated a deal with the railway companies and the Government that prevented women from retaining their positions on the railways after the end of the war. This was termed “acceptance without enthusiasm” by Hamilton when discussing the trade union agreement that was made by the railway industry and the Government during the First World War.³⁶⁶ This is reflected in the railway company magazines, which feature very few letters or articles originating from railwaymen complaining about women working as porters, guards or in other predominantly male occupations but also very few praising them either.

³⁶⁴ GWRM, 29, 4 (1917) p. 81 and GWRM, 27, 11 (1915) p. 301 features a photograph of female carriage cleaners at Old Oak Common and GWRM, 27, 12 (1915) p. 322 features photographs of female restaurant car waitresses and ticket collectors.

³⁶⁵ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p. 47

³⁶⁶ Hamilton, J. A. B., *Britain's Railways in World War I* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd, London, 1967) p. 106 and Thom, ‘Women and Work’ p. 304

Male clerks did not have the security of knowing that the women employed during the war would be forced to leave at the cessation of fighting because female clerks had been employed, albeit in smaller numbers, before the war. This made male clerks more vulnerable and potentially more hostile. Gail Braybon and Penny Summerfield subscribe to this idea in their work on women's experiences during both World Wars. They claim that the most animosity towards women's work came from male workers who feared for their own jobs during and after the war.³⁶⁷

The criticism levelled towards female clerks was focused on their ability, or perceived inability, to perform the work adequately. An article by a clerk, J.R. Bennett, in December 1915 argued that female clerks needed better training because although they were just as good as men at typing they were not as competent at answering technical questions.³⁶⁸ The reply from a female clerk in the following issue entitled, 'The Female Clerk. From the Feminine point of view' stated that it was selfish of male clerks to complain about the employment of women because with so many male relatives fighting abroad, many women needed to earn a wage to support themselves and their families. Also, "The Female clerks are not only "taking the places of men" but gallantly playing men's parts in supporting the homes and families of those who have given, or are risking, their all to purchase the security which the "male clerk" with the rest of us, enjoys."³⁶⁹ This language recalled male anxieties about avoiding conscription due to their railway work and the threat of women usurping their roles.

³⁶⁷ Braybon, G. and Summerfield, P. (eds.) *Out of the Cage: Women's Experiences in two World Wars* (Pandora Press, London, 1987) p. 72

³⁶⁸ GWRM, 27, 12 (1915) p. 319

³⁶⁹ GWRM, 28, 1 (1916) p. 11

This inversion of gender roles has been debated by historians in discussions on the role of women's work during the First World War. Janet Watson has argued that ideas about gender influenced the perception of the suitability of war work for women and the desire to ensure the preservation of traditional gender roles.³⁷⁰ This attempt to preserve the social order saw an emphasis on marriage and motherhood, women's traditional roles, both during and after the war. This was also in accordance with railway company ideas on the 'railway family'.³⁷¹ The Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act in 1919 brought about a re-establishment of this order and allayed men's fears over the role of women in the labour force. Gerry Rubin discusses how companies were more than happy to discharge female workers at the end of the war even before they had to comply with the Act. In this way, "the post-war threat to male domination, in the event, scarcely materialised."³⁷² A large number of the social notices in the GWR Magazine from the end of both the First and Second World Wars indicated that a high proportion of the female staff voluntarily left their jobs at the cessation of fighting to "return to domestic duties" or get married.³⁷³

The LNWR Gazette did not enter into debates about women workers and their suitability for railway work during war time. As their aim stated, the LNWR Gazette considered themselves a vehicle for education and reporting the social and sporting activities of railwaymen in the Company. They refused a request for a letters page in

³⁷⁰ Watson, Janet, 'Khaki Girls, VADs, and Tommy Sisters: Gender and Class in First World War Britain', *The International History Review*, 19, 1 (1997) p. 33

³⁷¹ Grayzel, Susan, *Women and the First World War* (Routledge, Abingdon, 2013) p. 77 and Braybon and Summerfield, *Out of the Cage* pp. 281 - 282

³⁷² Rubin, Gerry, 'Law as a bargaining weapon: British Labour and the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act 1919', *The Historical Journal*, 32, 4 (1989) p. 933.

³⁷³ GWRM, 58, 7 (1946) p.155

1913 because they were a “social organ.”³⁷⁴ This indicates that they perceived the letters page to have the potential to become a divisive element within their magazine. They did however include a large number of photographs of the LNWR’s women workers. Some of these showed men and women working quite happily together.³⁷⁵ Others were published of women working in the different departments of the Company, to promote the work that women did during the war but also to comply with requests from railwaymen fighting at the Front who wrote asking for more pictures of female railway workers to be published.³⁷⁶ There are a number of ways that this request could be interpreted, but it appears that the LNWR took the view that railwaymen viewed these female workers as a novelty and the inclusion of their photographs was used as a way to highlight how unusual it was to see women in these positions. They were also used as a way to demonstrate how successful the Company were in including them in the idea of the ‘railway family’. Many of the railway companies employed this tactic and included numerous photographs of women workers during the two World Wars as Figure 6 demonstrates. These photographs included details of the roles that female workers were employed in and included those engaged as clerks and others in more unusual manual grades.

³⁷⁴ LNWG, 2, 9 (1913) p.141

³⁷⁵ LNWG, 4, 32 (1915) p.106

³⁷⁶ LNWG, 5, 52 (1916) p.370.

Figure 6. Photographs of some of the female employees of the Great Western Railway Company, 27, 12 (1915) p.322, National Railway Museum, York, 1.0270.

On the formation of the LMS in 1923, a number of women worked for the Company, most predominantly as clerks. Although they were encouraged to become part of the 'railway family' through 'A Page for Women', as has been discussed earlier, this page did not cater to their specific needs. Many of the LMS sports clubs had women's sections but it was not until 1930 that women were able to participate in Ambulance competitions, which for so long had been a staple of railwaymen's social and educational life. The first competition attracted eighteen teams, whilst another attracted twenty-four women's teams.³⁷⁷ The popularity of the ambulance classes for women indicate how keen women were to participate in activities organised by the Company for the 'railway family'.

In April 1939, the LMS Magazine published a special edition, "Pride of place in this issue has been given to our thousands of women colleagues, and we are happy to have this opportunity of paying tribute to them for the important and integral part they play in our great organisation."³⁷⁸ This issue introduced a number of women workers from different departments to the readers, included a large number of photographs of them and also focused on the wives and daughters of railwaymen. It traced the history of women working for the LMS and focused on their achievements, including long service and sporting prowess in a very similar way to the ways that large numbers of railwaymen were celebrated every month. At this point in 1939, Britain was heading towards another war. Female labour would likely need to be utilised again, so to dedicate this particular issue to their female staff was a very useful tool to boost morale and ensure that female employees and non-working wives and daughters felt included

³⁷⁷ LMSM, 7, 6 (1930) p.210 and LMSM, 9, 5 (1932) p.172

³⁷⁸ LMSM, 16, 4 (1939) p.159

in the LMS Company and in the idea of the 'railway family' at a critical point for the Railway Company.

It is interesting to compare this attitude from the First World War to the articles that appeared in the magazines from 1939. On the outbreak of the Second World War, women were again employed in greater numbers than ever before on the railways, however there was a great deal less criticism of women workers in the pages of the GWR Magazine than during the First World War. One reason for this was that the Letters page, the focus of many critical missives from male staff members during the First World War, had been discontinued many years earlier so there were fewer vehicles for complaint. Also, women workers made up a larger percentage of the workforce on the outbreak of the Second World War and the precedent for their employment had been set during the First World War, therefore their employment did not come as a surprise to the male workforce.

Articles did appear that focused on the more unusual jobs that women were employed to do for the duration of the War in a similar vein to those which appeared during the First World War, for example, 'Women Porters "Go To It" on the GWR' and the success of an experimental trial of female train announcers, "passengers have commented favourably on the clearness and audibility of their announcements."³⁷⁹ An article on 'War-time Women Employees' commented on the fact that four thousand female clerks had been doing the job for a number of years but there were now also two thousand female porters. It continued, "Not all railway workshops are suitable for women employees" but fifty female police officers were also employed, and they could

³⁷⁹ GWRM, 53, (1941) 3 and 5, p.73 and p.126

do the job just as well as their male colleagues, who “have readily recognised their abilities.”³⁸⁰ This demonstrated that women were more accepted than ever before as railway workers, from the Company’s perspective at least.

The Extended Employment of Women Agreement of 1940 granted women who were working in ‘men’s jobs’ without assistance or supervision the right to equal pay, ensuring that they could not be employed to undercut men’s wages. The Restoration of Pre-war Trade Practices Act of 1942 guaranteed that women would not continue in roles designated as male-only after the war. This helped to allay many railwaymen’s fears and does not appear to have elicited much opposition from female railway workers. An article in GWR Magazine in July 1942 demonstrates that the Company was only too aware of these concerns and sought to prevent, with some success, unrest and tension between male and female workers. ‘Women Locomotive Builders at the Swindon Works’ explained how the introduction of women into Swindon Works was managed by the “co-operation of the management and the men”. The article stated that it was difficult to decide which jobs women were suitable for and in that respect, they often took the places of juniors or semi-skilled men in the Works. Although the article argued that the “introduction of women at Swindon has been well justified” it also stated that men’s jobs needed to be protected.³⁸¹ This was in order to minimize any conflict between male and female employees or railwaymen and their employers and to create sustained barriers to women’s participation in the railway industry.

³⁸⁰ GWRM, 53, 9 (1941) p.233

³⁸¹ GWRM, 54, 7 (1942) pp.123 - 124

3.8 Conclusion

The loyalty that the railway companies were able to foster in their railwaymen and the wider 'railway family' is most aptly demonstrated by a poem, written by Elbert Hubbard, which was sent in to the GWR magazine by one of the staff at Gloucester and was affixed to the wall in their office:

"If you work for a man, in heaven's name work for him. If he pays you wages which supply you bread and butter, work for him; speak well of him; stand by him, and stand by the institution he represents. If put to a pinch, an ounce of loyalty is worth a pound of cleverness. If you must vilify, condemn, and eternally disparage, resign your position, and when you are outside, damn to your heart's content, but as long as you are part of the institution do not condemn it. If you do that, you are loosening the tendrils that are holding you to the institution, and at the first high wind that comes along, you will be uprooted and blown away, and will probably never know the reason why."³⁸²

This poem encapsulates how railwaymen were supposed to feel towards their railway company and was published in the GWR magazine to demonstrate the loyalty they were able to inspire in their workers. The subtext of the poem is also critical towards unions, another reason for its publication in the company magazine. One of the most important uses of the idea of the 'railway family' for railway companies was to compete with the growing strength of trade unions for the loyalty of their employees and non-working family members. Loyalty, they believed, would prevent industrial unrest, create a better, more efficient workforce and encourage workers to realise that

³⁸² GWRM, 59, 2 (1947) p.36

their welfare was bound up with the Company, rather than with a trade union. As well as taking care of their employees, with highly-skilled and more efficient workers the railway companies stood to make more profits and earn a better reputation.

The railway companies used their magazines in differing ways to maintain the idea of the 'railway family' and even extend it in times of crisis. By encouraging the participation of railwaymen, female workers and non-working wives and children in company sponsored social and sporting activities and by providing for the housing and educational needs of the staff, railway companies demonstrated to their employees and more importantly, to their non-working family members why they should remain loyal to the company and what the Company could offer to them in return. Railway companies experienced difficult circumstances in this period, such as economic depression or during the two World Wars, and the idea of the 'railway family' was used to demonstrate to railwaymen why they needed to work hard and help make the company more efficient. Many other employees could not claim to work for a company that provided housing, sporting facilities, social clubs and education for their workers as well as a stable job and relatively good wages. The idea of the 'railway family' was also used to stabilize the companies during times of internal crisis, for example with the introduction of women workers or the amalgamations of 1923. Despite facing a hostile reception, women workers were drawn into the idea of the 'railway family' with positive articles and photographs featuring in the magazine and their inclusion into most sports and social clubs supported by the railway companies. By allowing railwaymen the opportunity to express their feelings about women workers on the pages of the magazines and allowing these female workers the right to reply, the

company were attempting to prevent this discord from entering their workspaces which they did with some success.

From the literature concerning company magazines, the ways that the railway companies utilised the idea of the 'railway family' within their magazines was not unexpected. Occasionally, depending on the views of the writers or editors, some of the opinions propounded in the magazines did not conform to the traditional family values that the magazines espoused. This was particularly the case with the LNWR women's page, 'Tea Table Topics' which was a progressive force for women in an era when many were campaigning for greater social, economic and political rights for women. After the First World War, and particularly during the latter half of the 1920s and into the 1930s, the content of many of the railway company magazines became more homogenous, propagating a version of the idea of the 'railway family' that was very traditional and focused around male breadwinners and wives as homemakers. Throughout the period 1900 to 1948 however, the idea of the 'railway family' as a traditional family unit and as a wider railway community was a consistent force in much of the content that appeared within railway company magazines. Change over time within the railway company magazines was limited – they found a successful formula for dispensing paternalism, and later their industrial welfare, which encouraged a community of railway workers and their families to form around each discrete company. In turn, this enhanced the bond felt by employees and their family members to the company that took care of them. Thus, the idea of the 'railway family' was a successful tool in ensuring the loyalty of railway company employees and their non-working family members throughout the period.

Chapter 4. **TRADE UNIONS AND THE ‘RAILWAY FAMILY’ IN PRINT MEDIA**

The idea of the ‘railway family’ was approached in a different way by railway trade unions than it was by railway companies. The actual term ‘railway family’ was used very little in literature directed towards trade union members and their families. However, the main themes of loyalty, support and mutual endeavour were strongly encouraged and implied within much of the writing that was issued by and for railwaymen and their non-working family members. The use of the terms ‘brother’ and ‘sister’ to refer to fellow members of the trade union, rather than members of the nuclear family, was common practice amongst trade unions but it has wider significance for the idea of the ‘railway family’ and railway trade unions. The use of these terms implies that there was already an existing quasi-family relationship between trade union members without the intervention of the unions or their emphasis on the ‘railway family’. Therefore, trade unions sought to focus on the role of women and children who were not full trade union members in their deployment of the ‘railway family’.

It was in the interests of the trade unions to secure the loyalty of the wider ‘railway family’; they preferred to include women and children in the idea of the ‘railway family’ through their own separate activities. This allowed the trade unions to maintain an appropriate distance between their full male members and the associated or temporary female members. This tactic of keeping women separate and unequal was primarily to ensure the continued domination of the rights of male railway

workers over their female colleagues, including protecting men's wages, their jobs and the ideology of the male breadwinner.³⁸³ By drawing women and children into the idea of the 'railway family', the railway trade unions were attempting to strengthen their membership base and encourage the involvement of a railwayman's family in campaigns that affected them, yet prevent any discord amongst members or accusations that the growing number of female railway workers were threatening the wages and livelihoods of their male members. The success of these strategies will be discussed in this chapter.

4.1 The growth of railway trade unions

As A.E. Musson has argued, trade union history cannot be written in a vacuum.³⁸⁴ It is important to consider the political, economic, legal, and the social conditions with which railway trade unionism and the idea of the 'railway family' was founded, grew and maintained. Trade unions emerged within the railway industry from the 1870s but they grew slowly and faced many challenges over the first forty years. Phillip Bagwell, in his history of the National Union of Railwaymen states that, "There can be no doubt that the scales were heavily weighted against any trade union activity on the railways during the first forty years of their rapid expansion."³⁸⁵ The Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) was founded in 1871 as the first general union for railway workers. Previously only skilled railwaymen were able to join a craft union, which attempted to protect their skills rather than their employment

³⁸³ Fraser, W. Hamish, *A History of British Trade Unionism 1700 - 1998* (Macmillan Press, London, 1999) p.133

³⁸⁴ Musson, A.E., *Trade Unions and Social History* (Frank Cass and Company Ltd, London, 1974) p.1

³⁸⁵ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p.28

rights. The formation of the ASRS opened up trade unionism to larger numbers of railway workers, although it was not until the foundation of the General Railway Workers Union in 1889 that low-paid grades and workshop staff were encouraged to join a trade union.³⁸⁶ Trade union activity gradually became more widespread throughout all industries in Britain during the latter half of the nineteenth century. The formation of the Trades Union Congress in 1868 cemented these gains.³⁸⁷ The growth in trade unionism also encouraged the formation of the Labour Party in 1906, supported by financial contributions from trade union members.³⁸⁸ The organisations with which railway trade unions allied themselves with dictated some of the content of their newspapers and magazines, as the trade unions sought to inform their members on these associations and encourage them to give their wholehearted support.

In 1913, the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) was formed through the amalgamation of the ASRS with the General Railway Workers Union and the United Pointsman and Signalmen's Society.³⁸⁹ The amalgamated union opened itself up to any male railway worker employed on the railways.³⁹⁰ The early years of the twentieth century were a turning point for railway trade unions and it was during this era that the idea of the 'railway family' became an important strategy for trade unions. It was used in multiple ways in order to foster loyalty amongst the membership of the various national railway trade unions both in relation to one another and against railway

³⁸⁶ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, pp. 6 - 7

³⁸⁷ Thane, *Cassell's Companion*, p.387

³⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, p.224

³⁸⁹ Throughout this chapter, NUR refers to the amalgamated union from 1913 whilst ASRS refers to the union before 1913 only.

³⁹⁰ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p.335

company management as industrial relations became increasingly strained. Trade unions were presented with a series of challenges during the first half of the twentieth century which forced them to adapt the way that the idea of the 'railway family' was deployed in order to foster solidarity between and beyond their membership.

Trade unions in the railway industry emerged late and grew slowly in comparison to other large-scale British industries, for example the unions within the cotton industry.³⁹¹ Craft unions, prevalent in the workshops of railway towns such as Derby and Crewe, emerged much earlier, but these were a way of protecting the integrity of the craft as well as ensuring the continued job security of the skilled men within the union. The craft unions encouraged their members to re-enter the labour market for higher wages, established strict codes of discipline and provided a wide variety of social events to bond members together and welfare schemes and sick clubs to protect members in the event of ill health or unemployment.³⁹² They recruited only the skilled men of the workshops, meaning other railway grades and semi-skilled and unskilled labourers were left without a union and reinforced the divisions and stratifications amongst railway employees. Trade unions at this point in time were not acting as a cohesive force amongst railway employees and were instead enhancing the divisions between railwaymen of differing grade boundaries and skill levels.

From 1871, workers from all grades were recruited into the ASRS except the semi-skilled and unskilled from the workshops who had to wait until 1889 and the formation of the General Railway Workers Union (GRWU).³⁹³ Locomotive drivers and

³⁹¹ Joyce, P, *Work, Society and Politics* (Methuen and Co Ltd, London, 1982) discusses the advent of trade unions in the cotton industry from the 1830s and 1840s.

³⁹² Drummond, *Crewe: Railway Town, Company and People*, p. 76

³⁹³ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p. 6

firemen had a separate union, the Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF), which was formed in 1880 after the Great Western Railway Company's longest serving drivers and firemen had their pay cut and the ASRS refused to support any action to rectify this situation. Railway companies vehemently disliked these new unions and promised that they would not recognise or deal with representatives from the unions and would take action against employees who were found to be members.³⁹⁴ This proved to become more challenging when railway trade unions grew in size and strength.

Railway clerks also formed their own union in 1897, and members were sanctioned for joining the Railway Clerks Association (RCA) by railway companies.³⁹⁵ This stunted the growth of the union, although by 1904 they had 4000 members.³⁹⁶ Between 1904 and 1918, membership rose from 7% of railway clerks to 61%.³⁹⁷ The concerted opposition of railway companies and their frequent amalgamations which threatened security and promotions laid the foundations for the mass unionisation of railway clerks.³⁹⁸ However, the introduction of thousands of female clerks during the First World War was also of primary concern to the RCA. The entry of female clerks into the railway workforce occurred much later than many other white-collar industries; the Great Western Railway Company (GWR) experimented with female clerks from 1909, whereas the Prudential Insurance firm was the first business to

³⁹⁴ Ward, J. T and Fraser, W. Hamish, *Workers and Employers. Documents on Trade Unions and Industrial Relations in Britain since the Eighteenth Century* (Macmillan Press, London, 1980) p.164

³⁹⁵ Railway Clerks Association of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, *Railway Clerks Association 1897 – 1947: Fifty years of Trade Union Endeavour* (London, 1947) p. 5

³⁹⁶ Ibid., p. 7

³⁹⁷ Lockwood, *The Black Coated Worker*, p.149

³⁹⁸ Ibid., p.149

utilise female labour in their offices in 1871.³⁹⁹ The huge increase in the number of female clerks during the First World War threatened the stability and security of employment for male railway clerks and these roles were not covered by the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act, 1919 which forced women from the 'men's jobs' that they had undertaken during the war.⁴⁰⁰ By 1917 membership of the RCA had risen to 58,661, indicating the perceived necessity of the union for both male and female clerks.⁴⁰¹ Women workers were a growing factor in the idea of the 'railway family' throughout this period and the ways that the trade unions, and particularly the RCA, dealt with women workers will be discussed in this chapter.

The lack of recognition afforded to the trade unions by the railway companies before the First World War contributed to their slow emergence. As railway companies did not officially recognise the rights of trade unions, they refused to negotiate with them or even meet their leaders. It was not until the Conciliation Agreement in 1907 that railway companies were forced to consider the petitions of trade unions in order to avoid a strike. Many of the railway companies disliked this agreement and viewed it as an alternative to trade union recognition.⁴⁰² Workers complained that they faced intimidation by managers who disrupted negotiations and continued to ignore petitions.⁴⁰³ This continued to make it difficult for the unions to negotiate with the railway companies and therefore, in the face of adverse working conditions and low wages, railwaymen went on strike in 1911. This was a well organised strike that united

³⁹⁹ Jordan, Ellen, 'The Lady Clerks at the Prudential: The Beginning of Vertical Segregation by Sex in Clerical Work in Nineteenth Century Britain', *Gender and History*, 8, 1 (1996) p.67

⁴⁰⁰ Scott, Peter and Walker, James Trevor, 'Demonstrating distinction at 'the lowest edge of the black-coated class': The family expenditure of Edwardian railway clerks', *Business History*, 57, 4 (2015) p.568

⁴⁰¹ Railway Clerks Association, *Railway Clerks Association 1897 - 1947*, p. 17

⁴⁰² Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p. 271

⁴⁰³ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p. 14

all the railway unions and forced the companies into an untenable position. Timetables were greatly disrupted and there were anxieties over coal and food supplies. Troops were dispatched to certain areas, leading to confrontations between the troops, police and the working-class crowds that had gathered.⁴⁰⁴ After two days, the Government forced the railway companies and the unions together thus affording the unions the recognition that they desired.

McKenna claims that it was this strike that gave the railway trade unions the recognition that they had been fighting for. Yet it appears that some railway companies still continued to take a hard line against them; Howell states that the Midland Railway Company was condemned by the ASRS for their bullying and intimidation of workers who had taken part in the 1911 strike on their return to work.⁴⁰⁵ Although some Companies continued to penalise strikers and members of railway trade unions, the process of recognition had begun. With the advent of the National Union of Railwaymen in 1913 and First World War in 1914, railway companies had to negotiate with trade unions to ensure the smooth running of the railways.

Political cases and judgements also adversely affected the capabilities of the railway trade unions during the early 1900s. It was the Taff Vale case of 1901 and the Osborne judgement of 1909 that preoccupied the railway unions in the early years of the twentieth century and stunted their growth and effectiveness. The Taff Vale case was brought against the ASRS by the Taff Vale Railway Company in 1900. They wanted to sue the ASRS for loss of earnings caused by a strike on their railway in 1890. This was the first strike officially sponsored by the ASRS after the company refused to

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 15

⁴⁰⁵ McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, p. 58 and Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p. 21

negotiate with their employees over their petition for a guaranteed week's pay and a maximum 60-hour week. After a week of negotiation with Edward Harford, the ASRS Secretary, the Taff Vale Company agreed to the demands for all full-time employees.⁴⁰⁶ However, in 1900 the Taff Vale Railway Company brought an action against the ASRS. After a series of judgements and appeals the House of Lords upheld that, "although the ASRS was not a corporate body, the union could be sued in a corporate capacity for damages alleged to have been caused by the actions of its officers."⁴⁰⁷ The ASRS had to pay £23,000 from its funds to the Taff Vale Company.⁴⁰⁸ The position of the unions was now in jeopardy - although striking was not illegal, unions faced being sued if their members went on strike. Thus, the number of trade disputes during the years 1901 to 1906 was minimal and certainly brought about a quiet period in the history of railway trade unions. During this period, membership of the Labour Representation Committee (LRC) greatly increased as trade unions affiliated to the group in the hope of parliamentary reform in their favour.⁴⁰⁹ After the General Election of 1906 returned twenty-nine Labour MPs and a Liberal landslide, Keir Hardie the Labour MP for Merthyr Tydfil introduced the Trade Disputes Bill into Parliament that reversed the decision of the House of Lords in the Taff Vale case and ensured that trade unions could not be sued for strike action taken by their members.⁴¹⁰

The Osborne case and judgement also diverted the attentions of trade union Executive Committees and members away from campaigns about wages and

⁴⁰⁶ Ibid., pp. 137 – 139.

⁴⁰⁷ Saville, John, 'The Trade Disputes Act of 1906' *Historical Studies in Industrial Relations*, 1 (1996), p. 15

⁴⁰⁸ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p. 224

⁴⁰⁹ Saville, 'The Trade Disputes Act', p. 15

⁴¹⁰ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, pp. 226 – 227 and Saville, 'The Trade Disputes Act', Appendix A and Appendix B, pp. 41 - 43

conditions between 1909 and 1913. In 1903, ASRS members had to pay a one shilling levy in support of ASRS parliamentary candidates and the union decreed that all railwaymen candidates had to be approved by the LRC.⁴¹¹ This caused a great deal of consternation for supporters of the Liberal and Conservative Parties within the ASRS. Walter Osborne, branch Secretary for Walthamstow ASRS threatened legal action against the Union in 1905 if this situation was not remedied.⁴¹² By 1906, the ASRS required all parliamentary candidates to sign the Labour Party constitution so Osborne decided to mount a case against the ASRS, claiming that trade union representation should be independent and not associated with the Labour Party. The House of Lords delivered their judgement in 1909 and found that “trade union spending on parliamentary representation was *ultra vires* – that is, beyond the lawful powers possessed by unions under governing statute.”⁴¹³ As Klarman argues, this decision went further than Osborne expected – not only did it prevent the ASRS funding Labour Party candidates, they were also prohibited from funding Liberal or Conservative candidates as well as “contributions to local trades councils and the TUC, deputations to ministers, educational spending, investment in a Labour newspaper, and several other union activities.”⁴¹⁴ This severely limited the scope of the ASRS and all other trade unions. The decision placed all unions and their representative MPs, regardless of political affiliation, in the same situation; by 1911 a reversal of the ruling was being debated in Parliament and in 1913 the Trade Union Act partially reversed the Osborne judgement.⁴¹⁵ The Trade Union Act declared that Trade Unions could spend money on

⁴¹¹ Klarman, M., ‘Osborne: a judgement gone too far?’, *English Historical Review*, 1988, p. 21

⁴¹² *Ibid.*, p. 22

⁴¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 27

⁴¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 34

⁴¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 39

political aims as long as members voted for it in a secret ballot, money came from a separate fund to the general fund and members could opt out if they did not want to pay towards these aims.⁴¹⁶ As has been demonstrated by Bagwell, Saville and Klarman and indicated by these conclusions, the first decades of the twentieth century were dominated by political upheaval that prevented the trade unions from effectively pursuing their aims and assisting their members.

During the First World War, the NUR campaigned for a war bonus for railway workers and their families who were hit hard by rising prices and rationing. The Government was anxious to avoid any stoppages and strikes were made illegal in 1915 by the Munitions of War Act.⁴¹⁷ Bagwell claims that railwaymen were restrained when it came to campaigning for more money during the War as they were mindful of their colleagues fighting at the Front.⁴¹⁸ Therefore in 1919 with the end of the War, railwaymen expected to be rewarded for their dedication and hard work. However, they continued to suffer from poor working conditions, long hours and a reduced standard of living. Negotiations between the NUR, ASLEF and the Government broke down and a joint strike was declared. The co-operation between the two unions proved to be effective with many RCA members also refusing to act as blacklegs and strike breakers for the companies.⁴¹⁹ During the nine-day strike, union members used their time to help raise funds, utilised the media to publicise the struggles of the railway workers and organised entertainments to keep strikers amused. Activities included

⁴¹⁶ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p. 256

⁴¹⁷ 'Trade Unions and the Law', http://humanities.uwe.ac.uk/bhr/Main/trade_union/6_law.htm from Dawson, K., & Wall, P., *Society and Industry in the 19th Century: The problem of poverty* (Vol. 5). (Oxford UP, 1969) (24/11/14)

⁴¹⁸ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p.356

⁴¹⁹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 16, 192 (1919) p.262

marches and football matches whilst wives of railwaymen provided the refreshments at these events and also organised concerts in the evenings.⁴²⁰ Fearing that other unions would be prompted to join the strike, the Government agreed a settlement with the NUR and ALSEF, stabilising wages with the cost of living.⁴²¹ This then led to the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, inviting members of the NUR and ASLEF to join both the Central and the National Wages Board, both of which were established to help negotiate wages and working conditions. The Government also published a White Paper in June 1920 which stated that, “the Government are of the opinion that the time has arrived when the workers, both official and manual workers, should have some voice in management.”⁴²² This step, combined with the full recognition of trade unions by railway companies achieved by 1918, helped to create the idea that railway trade unionism could be viewed as ‘respectable’ and encouraged the further extension of the idea of the ‘railway family’ to include the wives and non-working family members of trade union railwaymen.⁴²³ By 1920 both railway workers and the railway unions were in a much stronger position and had finally emerged as powers able to rival the authority, control and paternalism of railway companies.

4.2 Trade unions and the idea of the ‘railway family’

Trade unions utilised the idea of the ‘railway family’ in a different way to railway companies although they used a similar medium – their newspapers. Initially, the idea of the ‘railway family’ was used to bond male members together with each other and

⁴²⁰ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, pp.391 - 392

⁴²¹ Ibid., p.398

⁴²² Ibid., pp.408 - 409

⁴²³ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p. 9

with other railway unions in Britain and internationally. Women and children were included in the idea but in a more distinct and separate way; women's trade union auxiliaries, discussed in Chapter 5, provided separate spaces for non-working women to become involved in trade union fundraising, campaigning and the creation of a support network for the female members of the trade union 'railway family'. Another important factor in the extension of the trade union idea of the 'railway family' was that railway workers came to the realisation that loyalty to their Company could be subdivided, and this was most keenly demonstrated by union and company insignia being worn together.⁴²⁴ As discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the railway companies, there was a shift in ideas about the nature of loyalty and the 'railway family' which also affected trade unions. This chapter will focus on how the idea of the 'railway family' was used and extended by both the ASRS, the NUR, the RCA and ASLEF. All these unions had a newspaper for their members which was an important tool in the dissemination of the idea of the 'railway family'. Women's pages, compiled and edited by the wives of railwaymen and members of the women's trade union auxiliaries, drew non-working women and children into the railway family and contrasted with the male-edited pages of the rest of the newspaper.

4.2.1 The Railway Review

The NUR utilised *The Railway Review* to shape and manage the idea of the 'railway family'. One of the key ways that the idea of the 'railway family' was promulgated was through the language used to describe the 'railway family' and the

⁴²⁴ McKenna, *The Railway Workers*, p. 60

relationship between NUR members, their families and the trade union in general. The term 'railway family' was not often used explicitly to describe this relationship. The language that was used included describing all railwaymen and their wives and children as "members of one family" and encouraging all members and those associated with the union to understand the benefits that the NUR could provide.⁴²⁵ It was common during this period for trade union members to describe themselves as 'brothers' – this was not unique to railway trade unions. However, members of the Railway Women's Guild also began to describe themselves as "sisters".⁴²⁶ Another term that was utilised in relation to older Guild members was "railway mothers", which again made reference to the idea of the 'railway family' and also afforded these women extra respect from Guild members and from railwaymen. This term was used in a letter from a railwayman in 1940 that characterised Guild members working on railway stations as "our railway mothers".⁴²⁷ One member of the Guild also used the pseudonym 'Guild Mother' when she wrote to *The Railway Review* praising the work of the union, the Guild and the *Review*.⁴²⁸ Thus, the language of the 'railway family' was being used by those it came to describe.

Membership of the ASRS was considered to be "the truest index of a railwaymen's love for his wife and children".⁴²⁹ By conflating membership of the union with the amount a man cared for his family, the trade union was attempting to use emotional ties to encourage railwaymen to join. By extension, membership was a way to take care of their family through associational benefits. The link between

⁴²⁵ *The Railway Review*, 1/6/1900, p9 and 11/10/1901, p.11

⁴²⁶ *The Railway Review*, 22/9/1905, p12

⁴²⁷ *The Railway Review*, 3/5/1940, p.11

⁴²⁸ *The Railway Review*, 7/1/1921, p.7

⁴²⁹ *The Railway Review*, 2/11/1900

membership of the union and care shown towards family and other dependents continued throughout the period, as an article in 1923 stated that “The sentimental side of such an industry as the railways is very pronounced amongst railwaymen.”⁴³⁰ Images were often used of women and children to emphasise the point that the union was trying to make with regard to wages and conditions. The cartoon in Figure 7 depicts the struggle families faced due to accidents and injuries and was intended to encourage railwaymen to join the union, or to give their wives the necessary tools to persuade them to become members.

⁴³⁰ *The Railway Review*, 5/1/1923, p.1



AN OBJECT-LESSON.

Mrs. SMITH (railwayman's wife, to Mrs. Jones, also railwayman's wife, both of whose husbands are laid up at home through the usual accidents):
 "Well, how are you getting on?"

Mrs. JONES: "Oh, very, very poorly. The doctor says my husband will never be able to do heavy work again; the railway company denies liability, and we have no friends to fight the case for us—whatever we shall do I don't know!"

Mrs. SMITH: "Well, thank goodness, I haven't much cause to worry. Your man should have been a member of the A.S.R.S., as mine is. They have taken my husband's case up, and will see us through, so we are all right without it costing us an extra penny."

Mrs. JONES: "Ah, if only my man had had the sense to join the A.S.R.S. we should not have been in this plight!"

Figure 7. A cartoon from *The Railway Review*, 08/01/1904, p.9. MSS.127/AS/4/1/11

Another particularly important way that female readers of *The Railway Review* were engaged in the idea of the 'railway family' was through the provision of a column for women which expanded in 1928 to become a full page. Initially this column was for the Railway Women's Guild, the women's auxiliary of the NUR, as a way for them to correspond with each other and share news about their activities.⁴³¹ In 1928, another column began entitled 'Mainly for Women' which included recipes, health and lifestyle tips.⁴³² The title is interesting as it suggests that the content of the column was not just for women, although it contained very little that was typically thought of to be of interest to men. The column was targeted towards the wives of railwaymen and discussed a variety of instructive and entertaining topics. One column, shortly after its introduction, included information about the history of dancing, a poem about the weather, advice on how to remove scars and how to clean brasses. There was also a recipe for beef balls and a recommendation to avoid "married slackness" as "It is a mistake to leave all the effort to the man and then to blame him when he admires and praises some plain little woman who understands the meaning of "making the most of herself"."⁴³³ This advice column continued to entrench gender divisions amongst men and women within the trade union and promoted the sorts of topics that wives should concern themselves with, which focused particularly on the home and family.

By including a column for women in their newspaper, the NUR were hoping to encourage the wives of railwaymen to read their newspaper and draw them into the idea of the 'railway family'. They were using a similar tactic to railway companies who

⁴³¹ The Railway Women's Guild will be discussed in detail in the next chapter

⁴³² *The Railway Review*, 6/1/1928, p.6

⁴³³ *The Railway Review*, 20/1/1928, p.6

also produced women's pages within their magazines. By including a page for women, the newspaper could have a more diverse audience and wives were encouraged to learn about the issues affecting railwaymen in order to become more well-rounded members of the 'railway family'. The interaction of women with this page, as demonstrated by the letters that were featured, confirms that this aim was at least partly successful. However, it was claimed on the page that it had been an "awful job" to get the Editor to grant a women's page – if this was the case, it seems at odds with the NUR's aim of encouraging non-working women to become part of the 'railway family'.⁴³⁴

This column was extended to a page in 1928 because "the women have become important now the new franchise has given them a majority, and all the work of the men in the Trade Unions can be easily set aside by a wrong vote at election times."⁴³⁵ This acknowledges that women became an important force to the NUR when they were included in the extension of the franchise. Women voters could upset the political undertakings of trade unions in relation to the Labour Party, especially if they did not vote in a way that assisted the unions. The page was initially a lengthier version of the 'Mainly for Women' column and included a cookery section and a free sewing pattern introduced during the 1930s. Early in its extended format, the page was threatened due to a perceived lack of interest. However, it was continued and met with greater success, possibly after the threat to remove the page entirely was received and letters were sent protesting about this.⁴³⁶ Such pages were used to encourage thrift and self-

⁴³⁴ *The Railway Review*, 27/4/1928, p.5

⁴³⁵ *The Railway Review*, 13/4/1928, p.3

⁴³⁶ *The Railway Review*, 8/6/1928, p.6

sufficiency amongst the wives and daughters of railwaymen. These elements helped to appeal to a broader section of railwaymen's wives, aping populist women's magazines of the time.⁴³⁷ In a similar way to the company magazine women's pages discussed in Chapter 3, the increased cookery and sewing content were designed to encourage appropriate hobbies for women; not only was cookery and sewing practical, they could also be considered a fun way for non-working wives and daughters to pass the time.

Children were a key priority for the NUR as they were considered to be the future of the trade union and labour movement in general. They were also seen as important members of the 'railway family'. Articles appeared in *The Railway Review* that discussed the value of educating children in trade unionism and the benefits the NUR could reap from parents undertaking this task.⁴³⁸ The discussion of the best practices for raising children often appeared on the women's page, as the NUR strongly believed in the male breadwinner model, whereby men earned enough through their wages to provide for their families, and wives primarily took care of the house and children.⁴³⁹ *The Railway Review* appealed to children directly, introducing a colouring competition in September 1934 which the children were required to send to "Aunt Kitty", suggesting a personal and familial relationship with the Editor of the page.⁴⁴⁰ This created a relationship between the children of railwaymen and the NUR, extending the idea of the 'railway family'. This element for children was not included on the page every week, but when it did appear it was often in the form of a colouring competition that the Editors knew would appeal to both boys and girls.⁴⁴¹ Stories were

⁴³⁷ White, *Women's Magazines 1693 – 1968*, p.104

⁴³⁸ *The Railway Review*, 2/12/1932, p.1

⁴³⁹ *The Railway Review*, 4/5/1928, p.3

⁴⁴⁰ *The Railway Review*, 7/9/1934, p.10

⁴⁴¹ *The Railway Review*, 7/9/1934, p.10

also included for children, particularly at Christmas time, which drew children further into the 'railway family' through reading these in *The Railway Review* directly or as a result of their parents reading these stories to them.⁴⁴² Engaging with the newspaper encouraged children to see themselves as an important facet of the trade union and the 'railway family'. There was no section as such for older children or teenagers because it was assumed that they would already be working and enrolled in the union or part of the Railway Women's Guild with their mothers. Therefore, they were subsumed into the wider audience of *The Railway Review*.

From the 1920s onwards, the NUR used targeted advertising within their newspaper aimed towards the family members of railwaymen, in order to persuade them to join the approved societies of the NUR. The advert in Figure 8 is just one of a number that appeared in *The Railway Review* encouraging railwaymen to enrol their family members in the NUR Approved Society.

⁴⁴² *The Railway Review*, 21/12/1934, p.7

We desire again to remind
N.U.R. MEMBERS

that their

SONS,

DAUGHTERS,

and

RELATIVES

are eligible for membership
in the

N.U.R. APPROVED SOCIETY

Make sure they are enrolled with
us when they reach the age of 16

PLEASE EXHIBIT WHEREVER POSSIBLE.

Printed by the Co-operative Printing Society Limited, Tudor Street, New Bridge Street, E.C., and Published by the King's Cross Publishing Company Limited, 205, Euston Road, London, N.W.

Figure 8. An advert in *The Railway Review*, 4/5/1928, p.16. MSS.127/NU/4/1/16

These societies provided similar benefits to the railway company approved societies – insurance against illness, death or accident and protection for widows and orphans. By encouraging family members to join the societies, the NUR was widening their reach and utilising the idea of the ‘railway family’ to compete against railway company approved societies for the support of railwaymen and their families. Increased membership also ensured that the funds of these societies were bolstered and therefore more able to provide support during difficult times. Wives, widows and daughters were also encouraged to join the “approved section for women” in the Railway Women’s Guild column in *The Railway Review* as early as 1913.⁴⁴³

The Railway Review provided a platform for debate about many issues that affected the idea of the ‘railway family’ and its members. One of the most important of these was the provision of family allowances. Family allowances were first proposed by Eleanor Rathbone in 1918 who felt that a ‘family wage’ was not sufficient to prevent rising child poverty. Allowances were to be paid to mothers in order that they had a separate income that was not dependant on their husband’s ability to earn a wage or their willingness to share it.⁴⁴⁴ They were first debated in Rathbone’s proposed form at the Labour Party Conference in 1926 with reports being produced by a joint committee of the Labour Party and the Trade Union Congress in 1928 and 1929.⁴⁴⁵ The majority report stated that family allowances financed by the State should be paid to all those with children who were not paying income tax – “Those paying income tax were excluded on the grounds that their income was already adjusted to family size.”

⁴⁴³ *The Railway Review*, 14/2/1913, p.7

⁴⁴⁴ Land, Hilary, ‘The Family Wage’, *Feminist Review*, 6 (1980) p.55

⁴⁴⁵ Hall, Phoebe; Land, Hilary; Parker, Roy and Webb, Adrian, ‘The Introduction of Family Allowances: an Act of Historic Justice?’ in *Change, Choice and Conflict in Social Policy* (Heinemann, London, 1975) p.167 and p.169

The minority report concluded that social services for all should be developed first, rather than a focus on family allowances.⁴⁴⁶ At the TUC Conference in 1930, it was recommended that the minority report be accepted. Some trade unionists voiced fears against family allowances due to their perceived ability to weaken the collective bargaining power of the unions and the potential for discord between single and married men within the trade unions.⁴⁴⁷ The minority report was accepted and the TUC did not discuss the prospect of Family Allowances again until 1941. The Labour Party similarly followed suit.⁴⁴⁸

Family allowances were first debated within *The Railway Review* in 1930, reflecting the discussions at the TUC Conference and the acceptance of the minority report. The RWG had already indicated that they did not support the 'Mothers Pensions' at the Annual Conference in 1923 as they feared men's wages would be reduced as a result.⁴⁴⁹ Articles were printed in *The Railway Review* throughout 1930 that railed against family allowances, calling instead for higher wages for men in order that they could better support their families and for the development of existing social services. Letters and articles supporting family allowances were printed in reply.⁴⁵⁰ By allowing this debate, the NUR were demonstrating that the idea of the 'railway family' was important to them and not only were they determined to protect the wages of the male breadwinner, they wanted to ensure that the lives of railwaymen's wives and children were improved and allow their members voices to be heard. The Family Allowances Act came into force in June 1945, with the first payments being made on

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., p.169

⁴⁴⁷ Land, 'The Family Wage', p.56 and Hall et al, 'The Introduction of Family Allowances', p.169

⁴⁴⁸ Hall et al, 'The Introduction of Family Allowances', p.170 and p.186

⁴⁴⁹ *The Railway Review*, 6/7/1923, p.13

⁴⁵⁰ For example, *The Railway Review*, 21/3/1930, p.1 and 2/5/1930, p.5

the 6th August 1946, sixteen years after they were first discussed in *The Railway Review*.⁴⁵¹

Another issue that was discussed and debated in *The Railway Review* was birth control. This was an unusual step for a trade union with a male-dominated membership, however it indicates the strength of feeling that emerged amongst NUR members where the health and well-being of their wives, and that of the 'railway family', was concerned. Kate Fisher has used oral testimony to dispute the assumption that men held negative attitudes towards birth control in practice.⁴⁵² *The Railway Review* approached the question of birth control as an industrial question; they believed smaller families were of benefit to the worker as they ensured better maternal health and prevented high mortality and "extreme poverty". Railwaymen were advised to read *Maternity*, published by the Women's Co-operative Guild which included a number of letters from the wives of railwaymen. They were then to ask themselves the following questions: "Is the health of your wife, the happiness of your home, an industrial matter? Are wages all that matter?"⁴⁵³ In this respect, they were putting the welfare of women, and the 'railway family', above wages.

The Editor of the *Review* also hit out at members of the "Catholic Press" who challenged the right of trade union newspapers to address issues which did not directly affect the economic position of workers – the Editor stated that, "We do not live by bread alone, and there is more than one way of improving economic conditions."⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹Revenuebenefits, (9/6/2016) 'Child Benefit and Guardian's Allowance: Where it all started', http://revenuebenefits.org.uk/child-benefit/policy/where_it_all_started/ [30/6/2017]

⁴⁵² Fisher, Kate, "She Was Quite Satisfied With The Arrangements I Made': Gender and Birth Control in Britain 1920 – 1950', *Past and Present*, 169 (2000) p. 164

⁴⁵³ *The Railway Review*, 16/1/1925, p.11

⁴⁵⁴ *The Railway Review*, 6/2/1925, p.8

However, the Editor was clear that he did not expect the NUR to adopt any constitutional ruling on the birth control issue, and therefore *The Railway Review* was an open forum for discussion and able to convey their own opinions. Articles discussing birth control continued to be printed over the coming months and the *Review* also advertised talks by Dr Marie Stopes on birth control and published reports of her talks.⁴⁵⁵ This demonstrated the union's commitment to the welfare of the 'railway family'.⁴⁵⁶

The paternal practices of railway companies in relation to the 'railway family' were disputed. As discussed in Chapter 3, J.H Thomas, General Secretary of the NUR from 1916 to 1931 advocated that railwaymen accepted these gestures as "lubrication" for their hard work, however *The Railway Review* suggested that the companies were using their sports and social facilities to distract railwaymen from joining the trade union.⁴⁵⁷ Letters to the *Review* also suggested that railwaymen would prefer higher wages to more industrial welfare.⁴⁵⁸ This placed the basic tenants of the 'railway family' as defined by railway companies and trade unions in ideological opposition.

The idea of the 'railway family' appeared more often in *The Railway Review* from the 1920s onwards. This was due to the more secure position that railway trade unions had negotiated with the railway companies, meaning that they could concentrate on issues other than reacting to industrial disputes. Trade unionism had become a 'respectable' avenue for railwaymen, therefore encouraging the wives and children of

⁴⁵⁵ *The Railway Review*, 6/11/1925, p.10

⁴⁵⁶ An article in *The Railway Review*, 16/1/1925, p.11 on the benefits of birth control, and the importance of it to both men and women prompted a series of letters, articles and debates within the *Review*

⁴⁵⁷ *The Railway Review*, 31/8/1923, p.9

⁴⁵⁸ *The Railway Review*, 19/10/1923, p.13

railwaymen into the 'railway family' was appropriate. Also, there was an increased focus on the wives and children of NUR railwaymen who were becoming more influential politically and economically. However, the ways that the idea of the 'railway family' was engaged focused on traditional notions of family with the railwayman as breadwinner and his wife committed to providing a happy, healthy household.

4.2.2 The ASLEF Locomotive Journal

The ASLEF *Locomotive Journal* made little outright mention of the idea of the 'railway family', particularly in relation to the connection between railwaymen in other trade unions. One of the reasons for this was the fact that there was a great deal of conflict between ASLEF and the NUR throughout this period. In 1904, there was a federation agreed between ASLEF and the ASRS which encouraged joint meetings and conferences to discuss issues that faced all railwaymen. However, the sectional nature of ASLEF, focusing solely on the needs of locomotive men including drivers, firemen and cleaners went against the all-grades movement that the ASRS, and later the NUR, were keen to promote throughout this period. Rather than fostering a sense of the idea of the 'railway family' between all trade union members and a link between the two unions, ASLEF were adamant that they alone were the best hope for locomotivemen to improve their pay and working conditions. Repeated assertions were made within the *Locomotive Journal* to encourage ASRS and NUR locomotivemen to leave their union and join ASLEF.⁴⁵⁹ There were heated debates and a number of scathing articles and letters printed in both *The Railway Review* and the *Locomotive Journal* regarding the

⁴⁵⁹ *Locomotive Journal*, 17, 7 (1904) p.321

relationship between the two unions. During the First World War the NUR threatened legal action over alleged comments made by John Bromley, the ASLEF General Secretary, about the war bonus negotiations.⁴⁶⁰ Debates also raged in the early 1920s when the NUR refused to support ASLEF in a strike.⁴⁶¹ The idea of the 'railway family' could not be used to unite railwaymen from both unions when there was such animosity present from both sides, fuelled by sectionalism.

Exceptional railway families, so often present on the pages of railway company magazines, did not make a regular appearance in the *Locomotive Journal*. The trade union did not use examples of these families to emphasise the loyalty of their members as they felt this was tacitly demonstrated through recruiting new members, backing all ASLEF campaigns, and their willingness to strike at the behest of the union. Solitary examples of individual railway families did appear occasionally and as the author of one particular article acknowledges, "if the Society had not perceived its value we should not have been able to submit such an article..."⁴⁶² Due to the nature of railway work that often required transfer to different areas of the country and the challenges railwaymen faced in their ambitions to become firemen and drivers, it was often easier to find members of one family working for the same company than it was to find drivers and firemen from the same family working in the same shed and belonging to the same sectional union.

The idea of the 'railway family' as a way to draw women and children into the trade union was used in the *Locomotive Journal* even before the formation of the ASLEF

⁴⁶⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 28, 10 (1915) p.449

⁴⁶¹ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p.437

⁴⁶² *Locomotive Journal*, 53, 2 (1940) p.78

Women's Society in 1924, particularly in relation to the Orphan Fund and the Benevolent Fund. Families supported by the Benevolent Fund wrote to the *Locomotive Journal* thanking them for the monetary payment which, for example, "will greatly assist me in bringing my family up respectably."⁴⁶³ Respectability was an important notion for women, as will be discussed in Chapter 5, and this letter would have acted as an encouragement for railwaymen's wives to ensure that their family was part of the Fund. These letters continued to appear throughout the period and were one way that families could demonstrate their gratitude to the Benevolent Fund and by extension, to the 'railway family', for their support. They also helped encourage railwaymen to join the Benevolent Fund as they were combined with articles that described the assistance the Benevolent Fund and the Orphan Fund derived for the 'railway family'.

The ASLEF Women's Society was formed in 1924 and will be discussed in Chapter 5. Prior to this, women were mentioned sporadically throughout the *Locomotive Journal*. The idea of women assisting the Society was first mooted in 1910 when ASLEF struck up a relationship with the American Brotherhood of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen who had their own women's auxiliary. These women supported the Brotherhood in times of labour unrest, fundraised and organised social events.⁴⁶⁴ International links to other trade unions, particularly those which were for locomotivemen, were fostered by ASLEF and were a demonstration of the international nature of the idea of the 'railway family' extending between railwaymen and their families across national boundaries. A letter to the *Locomotive Journal* in 1911 called

⁴⁶³ *Locomotive Journal*, 17, 4 (1904) p.188

⁴⁶⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 23, 1 (1910) p. 26

for the foundation of an ASLEF Women's Society, extolling the organising capability of women and the support they could render to the Society and the families of union men particularly in times of sickness and bereavement.⁴⁶⁵ During the First World War, when the number of female railway workers increased, the Editor of the *Locomotive Journal* considered a column for female readers because "they have begun to write to the Journal, and to criticise us."⁴⁶⁶ In this spirit, the Editor stated that he welcomed letters from female readers and featured a letter from "A Member's Wife and an interested reader of the Journal" about the position German socialists and trade unionists, indicating the depth of knowledge about the wider labour movement that many wives of railwaymen held.⁴⁶⁷ However, this women's page failed to be realised until the Women's Society came into being in 1924.

The wives of ASLEF members did start to become more involved in the social and fundraising side of the union after the end of the First World War. Two letters featured in the July 1919 issue indicate the willingness of both men and women for a greater involvement of women in the Society. One railwayman wrote that having more social opportunities for both men and women connected to the trade union "would bring together the wives and families of our members."⁴⁶⁸ Another wife of a member wrote, "Get we women interested in the workings of the Society and you will find that we shall be real mates in the great and glorious cause of the 'Associated'." The letter argued that if the male members did this, they could guarantee that women would be more supportive of their husbands, help raise money for the Society and the Orphan

⁴⁶⁵ *Locomotive Journal*, 24, 4 (1911) p.191

⁴⁶⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 28, 2 (1915) p.49

⁴⁶⁷ *Locomotive Journal*, 28, 2 (1915) p.94

⁴⁶⁸ *Locomotive Journal*, 32, 7 (1919) p.217

Fund and educate women in the benefits of trade unions and the labour movement.⁴⁶⁹ An article in the following issue entitled 'Education Begins At Home - A Wife and Family Affair' encouraged men to discuss their trade union business and labour politics with their wives and for women to avoid regaling their husbands with the day's gossip on their return and instead discuss domestic affairs and work-related issues. By doing this, both parents would set an example to their children.⁴⁷⁰

These letters and articles indicate that after the First World War the wives of ASLEF railwaymen were considered a potential asset to the union and a force to mobilise. It is interesting to note that this shift corresponds with the entry of more women into the workforce and their greater social and political freedoms. However, the latter article in particular highlights the contradictions that arose when trade unions encouraged the involvement of women in their activities – women were expected not only to conform with stereotypical gender expectations including supporting their husbands and taking care of their children but were also expected to educate themselves in labour politics and wider trade union affairs.

The idea of the 'railway family' was used by ASLEF most often when describing their relationship with international railway trade unions. A page of the *Locomotive Journal* was often dedicated to reports of the international situation. This was particularly pertinent from the First World War onwards, where links were made with railwaymen in Norway, Sweden, New Zealand and the USA.⁴⁷¹ After the war, connections were established with locomotive unions in many European countries

⁴⁶⁹ *Locomotive Journal*, 32, 7 (1919) p.218

⁴⁷⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 32, 8 (1919) p.232

⁴⁷¹ *Locomotive Journal*, 28, 1 (1915) p.16

including Germany, Austria and Russia. During the ASLEF strike of 1924, the international nature of the idea of the 'railway family' was demonstrated by the telegrams of support that the union received from Denmark, New Zealand, Russia, Germany, Australia and America.⁴⁷² Disseminating the idea of the 'railway family' across railway trade unions in different countries encouraged ASLEF members to develop fraternal bonds across national boundaries and the support that the union showed was reciprocated in times of labour unrest or difficulty for railwaymen. The language of brotherhood and sisterhood, a common element within all trade unions, was reflected in letters and articles that concerned foreign railway trade unions, for example, an article about ASLEF loaning £500 to an Austrian locomotive union during the First World War was entitled 'Another Proof of the International Brotherhood of Workers'.⁴⁷³

4.2.3 The Railway Clerk/The Railway Service Journal

The Railway Clerk, the newspaper of the Railway Clerks Association (RCA) was first printed in 1904, seven years after the formation of the union. It was renamed to be *The Railway Service Journal* in 1919 in order to encompass all salaried staff including clerks, and those in administrative and supervisory roles. Within the first few issues of the newspaper there were calls to "join hands across the sea" with the national Railway Clerks Association of North America and an article which extolled the virtues of the union including "the Warmth of Friendship and Fraternity" and "It puts one in

⁴⁷² ASLEF, Special Strike Issue, February (1924) p.51

⁴⁷³ *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 4 (1925) p.148

communication with men worth knowing all over the country".⁴⁷⁴ The RCA recognised that the idea of the 'railway family' could be used to create an 'imagined community' between clerks across the railway network in Britain and across the world. The RCA were also keen to fight claims that "the RCA is killing *esprit de corps*" by encouraging this community spirit between their members in offices, branches and divisions.⁴⁷⁵

The RCA described themselves as a family unit that encompassed both men and women from relatively early within the period. An article on the opening of the new RCA Headquarters in 1915 stated that "Trade unions, like families, usually observe the custom of house-warming".⁴⁷⁶ Another article about the role of women within the history of the RCA stated that "all the way through, the wives and mothers of railway clerks have inspired and helped their men-folk to hold on and be true to themselves and their fellows...it is acknowledged to be intensely harder to struggle *alone* in the kitchen than to fight *on the company of your fellow clerks* in the Board-room."⁴⁷⁷ There was a clear acknowledgement by the RCA that women were an integral part of their union and of the idea of the 'railway family' even before they entered the railway workforce in any significant numbers. In contrast to the other railway trade unions discussed in this chapter, the RCA made more direct use of the language of the 'railway family'.

It is clear from *The Railway Clerk* that clerks did not appreciate the welfare efforts of railway companies and were outspoken against this within their newspaper, stating that welfare was used "to strengthen the shackles which already bind us too

⁴⁷⁴ *The Railway Clerk*, 1, 2 (1904) p.15 and 1, 3 (1904) pp.27-28

⁴⁷⁵ *The Railway Clerk*, 6, 71 (1909) p.207

⁴⁷⁶ *The Railway Clerk*, 12, 137 (1915) p.104

⁴⁷⁷ *The Railway Clerk*, 13, 152 (1916) p.196

strongly to the service.”⁴⁷⁸ Rather than spending money on welfare schemes clerks argued that “If the Company have any money to spare, they can spend it in a way that will prevent many wives and children *becoming* widows and orphans.”⁴⁷⁹ The RCA wanted to make their members aware of the fact that railway companies were using welfare schemes and educational and sports facilities as a way to build up a sense of goodwill amongst their employees in order to continue to dominate the trade unions who were now too strong for them to “tyrannise”.⁴⁸⁰ An article that appeared in the *Journal* in 1923, written by the General Welfare Superintendent of the LMS, described the industrial welfare schemes that they planned to initiate throughout the Company which they hoped would bring about “a strengthening of harmonious relationships between all those engaged on the Railway, a growth of the feeling of *esprit de corps* under the new conditions brought about by amalgamations, healthier and happier staff, and an ever-increasing efficiency and pride in the undertaking.”⁴⁸¹ Within the same issue, welfare schemes were praised by Scottish members of the RCA who described their communal spirit as having been “shattered” over the past few years.⁴⁸² After the First World War, with the acceptance of railway trade unions and a better bargaining position, the RCA and their members were more willing to accept the industrial welfare offered by railway companies.

Not only did railway clerks dislike the paternalistic welfare of railway companies but they also rejected the system of employment and promotion on the basis of one’s family connections. A series of letters that appeared in *The Railway Clerk*

⁴⁷⁸ *The Railway Clerk*, 11, 123 (1914) p.79

⁴⁷⁹ *The Railway Clerk*, 11, 126 (1914) p.165

⁴⁸⁰ *The Railway Service Journal*, 18, 207 (1921) p.64

⁴⁸¹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 20, 236 (1923) p.237

⁴⁸² *Ibid.*, p.255

in 1917 and 1918 criticised “The Railway “Family” System” including allegations that “I think I can state without hesitation that the L&NW Company is the most perfect family organisation in the world. The superior apprentice simply means, not superior in ability and education, but superior in blood relationship from the railway point of view.”⁴⁸³ The positive views that the railway companies and the other railway trade unions had for railway families, the generations of fathers and sons following in the same profession, were not held by clerks who struggled with low wages and poor promotion prospects without the nepotism that surrounded these railway families. Despite these concerns, a retiring clerk was described as being from “A Railway Family” in the personal columns of *The Railway Service Journal* as his grandfather and two uncles worked for the same company.⁴⁸⁴ This neatly encapsulates the divergent feeling amongst railway clerks about the ‘railway family’ and how the experience of being part of the ‘railway family’ could be an exclusionary experience for some. If railway clerks did not feel they were a part of the company ‘railway family’, through their association with a company and their blood relatives who had worked in the same or similar roles, then they were more likely to complain about the preferential treatment and alleged nepotism which occurred within the railway industry. This is a view that does not appear elsewhere in other trade union or railway company literature, indicating that it was a view held predominantly by clerks. They were certainly in a more unusual position than other railway workers, straddling between the firmly working-class railwayman and the middle-class management.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁸³ *The Railway Clerk*, 15, 169 (1918) p.13

⁴⁸⁴ *The Railway Service Journal*, 25, 295 (1928) p.265

⁴⁸⁵ Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*, p.81

In 1908, a column for the wives of railway clerks was begun because “The majority of women do not take sufficient interest in trade unionism. They do not seem to realise that it is really their battle as well which the men are fighting.”⁴⁸⁶ This marked the start of a series of columns and articles for the wives of railwaymen that explained the benefits of trade unionism for themselves and their families. The articles were also key in explaining to clerk’s wives why they needed to support their husband’s efforts and those of the RCA which drew them further into the idea of the ‘railway family’. These articles always related their discussion of political, social and economic ideas back to a woman’s home and family, for example how the nationalisation of railways and coal mines would allow for the production of cheaper electricity for cooking and cleaning.⁴⁸⁷ Another column attacked the “Home Drivel” of other women’s pages that caused women to waste hours fantasising over things they could not afford due to their husband’s low wages.⁴⁸⁸ Compared to the pages and columns that were provided for the wives of railwaymen in other trade union and railway company newspapers and magazines, the RCA women’s column recognised the need and desire of RCA members wives to be included in the union. It also emphasised the importance of a political education which they required to join in with a meaningful discussion with their husbands, fathers, sons and brothers.

However, the column for wives was dispensed with during 1915 due to the shortage of space and the entry of thousands of female clerks into the workforce. Any further articles or columns were primarily aimed at the new female workers, in order

⁴⁸⁶ *The Railway Clerk*, 5, 49 (1908) p.12

⁴⁸⁷ *The Railway Clerk*, 5, 50 (1908) p.25

⁴⁸⁸ *The Railway Clerk*, 5, 57 (1908) p.148

to encourage them to join the RCA. This was a very different tactic to the other two railway trade unions. These articles included open letters to female clerks from 'Melissa', the editor of the women's column which called on women to join the RCA to prevent the injustices being done to them by the railway companies. She argued that they needed to become more knowledgeable about their employment rights and why they needed to push for women to get the vote in order that the RCA could ensure greater strength in Parliament with their own MPs.⁴⁸⁹

After the end of the First World War, wives and children were again a consideration for the RCA, although the bulk of material continued to be aimed at the female clerks who remained in employment. At the 1923 RCA Annual Conference, the arguments for the limitation of night duty was prefaced with the idea that, "Wives and children, as well as the men immediately concerned, had some right consideration."⁴⁹⁰ The idea of the 'railway family' was still evident in the RCA with their concern for the standard of living of RCA member's wives and children as well as their own members. Female RCA delegates attended the Scottish Women's Trade Union Congress in 1926 which recognised the difficulty of maintaining contact with women once they left the workforce for marriage and motherhood and stated that "the economic struggle was felt most keenly in the home, something should be done to maintain contact between women and the Trade Union Movement after they had left industry".⁴⁹¹ Despite this recognition, very few trade unions in Britain had women's Guilds that would have maintained this link between married women outside the workforce and trade unions.

⁴⁸⁹ *The Railway Clerk*, 12, 143 (1915) p.268, 12, 144 (1915) p.308 and 13, 148 (1916) p.89

⁴⁹⁰ *The Railway Service Journal*, 20, 234 (1923) p.171

⁴⁹¹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 23, 275 (1926) p.379

During the 1930s, 'Our Woman's Page' (which was restarted with a new contributor, 'M', in 1932) was primarily directed towards female clerks. However, there was an understanding that the wives of RCA members were also important in supporting the struggles of both men and women for improved pay and conditions. The column praised the work of RCA member's wives at the Labour Women's Conference, calling for a meeting between female workers and wives in order that they can assist each other with their "common bond of interest".⁴⁹² When a proposed 10% cut in wages was mooted by railway companies, 'Our Woman's Page' insisted that it was important for women to organise as workers and as wives in order to avoid the great hardship that this would bring for all members of the 'railway family'.⁴⁹³ RCA member's wives also wrote to the *Journal* commending the RCA for their work but also imploring their husbands to be more open-minded and allow their wives to attend branch meetings so that they might understand and be more involved in the RCA struggles as "It would help to create a more sympathetic understanding than sometimes prevails."⁴⁹⁴ Again, the RCA took a more unusual approach to the idea of the 'railway family', acknowledging that there were ways that it could be improved but also that it remained one of the most important elements of the support structure that trade union members could depend upon.

However, despite calls for RCA member's wives to unite with female clerks there was also criticism of the attitude of non-working women to their working counterparts. An article by the then women's officer of the TUC stated that the end of

⁴⁹² *The Railway Service Journal*, 29, 344 (1932) p.346

⁴⁹³ *The Railway Service Journal*, 29, 347 (1932) p.452

⁴⁹⁴ *The Railway Service Journal*, 43, 515 (1946) p.506

the First World War brought about “a reaction against women’s work - even among women themselves”.⁴⁹⁵ Other female contributors to the *Journal* noted that working women were not encouraged to discuss issues that primarily affected housewives and mothers at the Labour Women’s Conference; the following year this divide between working and non-working women was still considered to be an issue by RCA delegates who argued that “I find much confusion in many minds as to what equality really means...too often does the house-wife show a lack of knowledge and understanding of trade unionism, proving that there is still much organising and educating to be done among the young girls at work to-day, who will be to-morrow’s housewives.”⁴⁹⁶

Family allowances, which provoked much discussion within the pages of *The Railway Review* were also the subject of debate within *The Railway Service Journal*; although some clerks aired a positive opinion of this state welfare scheme others took a more protectionist approach, whilst the majority of those who contributed to the debate stated that they did not have enough information on the form family allowances would take, their cost and their effect.⁴⁹⁷ Despite this, the RCA delegates at the Labour Women’s Conference voted against family allowances at the behest of the RCA Conference.⁴⁹⁸ Railway clerks used the pages of their newspaper to agitate for higher wages on the proviso that their wives and children were suffering in poor housing and were going without food, stating for example, “The husband may not buy a paper, smoke a pipe, treat his wife to a concert or the theatre, give his boy a penny for a top or ball, without feeling that he is depriving his family of some part of their meagre

⁴⁹⁵ *The Railway Service Journal*, 31, 364 (1934) p.143

⁴⁹⁶ *The Railway Service Journal*, 42, 501 (1945) pp.302-303 and 43, 515 (1946) p.495

⁴⁹⁷ *The Railway Service Journal*, 27, 318 (1930) p.241

⁴⁹⁸ *The Railway Service Journal*, 27, 320 (1930) p.301 and 27, 322 (1930) p.390

allowance for food.”⁴⁹⁹ Despite this, the RCA refused to support a scheme which would provide women and children with an allowance for fear that it would jeopardise their already weak position within the railway marketplace. Thus, the protection of their jobs and, inherently linked to this, their masculinity trumped concerns for the ‘railway family’ and even their own wives and children.

4.3 Women workers and trade unions

The relationship between women workers and trade unions was complex. The RCA was the first railway trade union to admit women workers and campaigned for them on an equal pay for equal work platform. Women were admitted into the NUR in 1915, during the peak of their employment during the First World War however the NUR and the other railway trade unions demanded that women’s work on the railways was temporary, not only during their employment in the First and Second World Wars but also in the inter war years.⁵⁰⁰ This was implemented with a marriage bar in the clerical grades and an unwillingness to employ women in other grades outside of the exceptional war time situation.

4.3.1 The RCA and female clerks

Railway clerks were one group most affected by the employment of women in the railway industry; the entry of women into railway offices increased throughout this period. David Lockwood has argued that clerical work had been stigmatised as ‘unmanly’ even before women entered the workforce due to the safe, clean, non-

⁴⁹⁹ *The Railway Clerk*, 5, 52 (1908) p.58

⁵⁰⁰ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, p.9

manual work that clerks undertook.⁵⁰¹ The RCA newspaper, *The Railway Clerk/The Railway Service Journal* used the language of masculinity to inspire clerks to join the union and push for improved pay and conditions, for example stating that “clerks are men” in an article about the rights of railway clerks and a front page article entitled “Don’t be Intimidated, Be Men!”⁵⁰² Reiterations that clerks were just as manly and masculine as manual railway workers were intended to bolster male RCA members in their struggle to accept the entry of female clerks into their workplace.

Whilst the RCA could not prevent the employment of women as clerks, they worked hard to protect the pay and promotion prospects of their male members and their status within the railway industry. The RCA was, according to Lockwood, one of the most class-conscious white-collar unions of the period.⁵⁰³ One reason for this was the relative low pay of railway clerks in relation to clerks in other industries and the fact that many railway clerks came from families of railway workers. According to Lockwood the railway clerk had as much in common with the manual railway worker as he did with the bank clerk, therefore the RCA was committed to ensuring the place of the railway clerk in the wider labour movement.⁵⁰⁴ A statement in *The Railway Clerk* is indicative of this: “The idea that everybody who “looks nice and dressy” is a snob and lacking in class consciousness is neither in accord with logic nor facts. Some individuals give one the impression that to be “advanced thinkers” and class conscious, one must wear a dirty collar, shabby clothes and a general air of slovenliness.”⁵⁰⁵ Their class-consciousness engendered support from both the NUR and ASLEF, especially when

⁵⁰¹ Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*, p.123

⁵⁰² *The Railway Clerk*, 6, 67 (1909) p.134 and 8, 95 (1911) p.221

⁵⁰³ *Ibid.*, p.156

⁵⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, p.197

⁵⁰⁵ *The Railway Clerk*, October 1917, in Lockwood, *The Blackcoated Worker*, p.136

RCA members refused to act as strike-breakers.⁵⁰⁶ Articles and letters in the 1926 strike issue of *The Railway Service Journal* demonstrated pride in their class-consciousness, which was described as “a clash of loyalties, and with the vast majority of members the higher loyalty won”.⁵⁰⁷ This higher loyalty was towards other workers of their own class, joined through their mutual trade unionism, rather than the company loyalty that had been ingrained into railway clerks for many years. However, this support from other unions did not manifest itself during the RCA’s dealing with female clerks leaving them to create a solution that balanced the needs and priorities of their male members with the specific challenges that arose with the employment of women in a male-dominated industry.

From the outset of the employment of female clerks, the RCA insisted that male and female clerks be employed and paid on the same scales in order to prevent female clerks undercutting their male counterparts, stating that, “It is well known that the RCA has no objections to lady clerks being employed on the same terms as men”.⁵⁰⁸ The call for equal pay for equal work continued throughout the period although this progressive attitude was more in aid of securing the pay and positions of male clerks in the face of mass employment of women than encouraging female clerks into the ‘railway family’. It was most prominent during the First and Second World Wars, when male clerks were at serious risk of being replaced by the “cheap female labour” that they detested.⁵⁰⁹ However, the RCA came to realise that encouraging female clerks to become temporary members of the ‘railway family’ might work to their advantage.

⁵⁰⁶ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p.297

⁵⁰⁷ *The Railway Service Journal*, 23, 270 (1926) p.193

⁵⁰⁸ *The Railway Clerk*, 7, 75 (1910) p.56

⁵⁰⁹ *The Railway Clerk*, 6, 67 (1909) p.130

They stated that they were not only concerned with protecting the rights and benefits of their male members but “We have just as much concern for the welfare of the girls who may be employed as we have for the men who may be removed to make room for them.”⁵¹⁰ By ensuring that their tone was welcoming, caring and inclusive, the RCA were attempting to ensure that female clerks felt obliged to join the RCA because they were part of the ‘railway family’. It was only one month after the above article was published that the RCA enrolled their first female member; the following year the first resolution on equal pay for female clerks was passed at the RCA Annual Conference.⁵¹¹ The RCA were years ahead of the NUR or ASLEF when it came to accepting women as member’s and campaigning for a fair wage for the work they were undertaking, due primarily to the fact that they had to negotiate the issue of women in the workforce far earlier than the NUR or ASLEF. In this respect, the RCA set out the template for how the NUR and ASLEF would later come to deal with women workers – by encouraging them to temporarily become members of the ‘railway family’ and insisting that they were paid the minimum rate for men’s work when they were undertaking the job that was defined as a ‘man’s role’.

This does not mean that the RCA or its members were complimentary about their female colleagues, particularly before female clerks were encouraged to join the union in significant numbers. One article in 1913 stated “That the introduction of female telegraphists on our railways has acted detrimentally to the males cannot, we think, be gainsaid.”⁵¹² Complaints were voiced over the quality of women’s work, the

⁵¹⁰ *The Railway Clerk*, 7, 81 (1910) p.172

⁵¹¹ *The Railway Clerk*, 7, 82 (1910) p.191 and 8, 90 (1911) p.128

⁵¹² *The Railway Clerk*, 10, 109 (1913) p.4

fact that they were slower and that male clerks often got punished for their mistakes. The increase in night and Sunday duty was also blamed on the introduction of female clerks, who were prevented from working these shifts due to considerations for their safety.⁵¹³ Some male clerks even went as far as stating that if female clerks were paid on the same scales as men, many would find themselves quickly redundant as they were not as competent as male clerks.⁵¹⁴ A scathing article just before the start of the First World War in 1914 characterised the introduction of more female workers as “Ladyitis”, a “dread disease” from which “no centre, no department is immune from attack.”⁵¹⁵ Once the War began the tone of these attacks changed as many male clerks recognised that for numerous women, work was the way in which they were able to support their families and dependants.⁵¹⁶ It was at this point that the calls for equal pay for equal work intensified in order to protect the jobs of male clerks who had joined up and to allow female clerks a satisfactory wage which would allow them to support their families. The President of the RCA stated that “the RCA will do everything possible to prevent the employment of women being developed and perpetuated to the detriment of the present conditions of service for men.”⁵¹⁷ Equal pay for equal work was an important way in which these conditions could be protected.

The first female delegate to an RCA Annual Conference, Mamie Thompson, was elected in 1915. She also acted as the female organiser for her branch in Oldham. The RCA considered it imperative that all female clerks joined the union and Miss Thompson spoke at the Conference on the need for the RCA to “organise and educate

⁵¹³ *The Railway Clerk*, 10, 111 (1913) p.56

⁵¹⁴ *The Railway Clerk*, 10, 112 (1913) p.76

⁵¹⁵ *The Railway Clerk*, 11, 127 (1914) p.179

⁵¹⁶ *The Railway Clerk*, 12, 136 (1915) p.66

⁵¹⁷ *The Railway Clerk*, 12, 138 (1915) p.125

them [women], though some men were so prejudiced that they would not do this.”⁵¹⁸ Miss Thompson became a stalwart of the RCA and the labour movement more generally, first in her role as organiser then as a married visitor to the Conference with her husband. She was also appointed as a women’s organiser for the Labour Party in 1918, for which she left the railway service.⁵¹⁹ In 1928 she contributed an article to *The Railway Service Journal* special recruiting issue for women under her married name, Mary Elizabeth Anderson entitled ‘Looking Backward...and Forward’ which described her experiences as an RCA member, conference delegate and women’s organiser and encouraged female clerks to “accept the invitation to share in the life of the Association.”⁵²⁰ There were a number of prominent female RCA members between 1910 and 1948, whose primary focus was on the organisation and education of female clerks. A special meeting of female clerks in London encapsulated their important function to, ““educate, agitate, organise.””⁵²¹

The organisation of female workers was approached in a variety of ways. One tactic was the dedication of the women’s column/page to female clerks; the column attempted to explain why it was so important for women to join the RCA and why they needed to campaign for equal pay. By June 1916, 2000 women were RCA members and a special women’s conference was held to discuss how the RCA could handle their specific needs.⁵²² The report of this Conference stated that amongst the measures the RCA should take, the branches needed to be more open to women members and

⁵¹⁸ *The Railway Clerk*, 12, 138 (1915) p.139

⁵¹⁹ *The Railway Clerk*, 15, 178 (1918) p.16

⁵²⁰ *The Railway Service Journal*, 25, 299 (1928) p.418

⁵²¹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 27, 317 (1930) p.192

⁵²² *The Railway Clerk*, 13, 150 (1916) p.149

facilitate their needs as well as those of male members.⁵²³ In order to do this, and to prevent the “smouldering dissatisfaction” that was occurring within many men’s branches the RCA proposed a debate on the role of women’s work on the railways within their newspaper with questions like “Is railway clerical work likely to unfit women for the bearing and rearing of children, and if so should not their permanent employment after the war be vigorously opposed on the high ground of race preservation?” and “Should not some effort be made to get the Railway Companies to keep as many as possible of these women in order to reduce the excessive hours of duty of many of the male clerks?”⁵²⁴ This debate never materialised; however, complaints about women workers from male clerks ceased to appear within the magazine and were replaced with letters from female clerks that urged the RCA to continue to campaign for equal pay and a fairer wage and war bonus for women.⁵²⁵ It is unclear whether this was an Editorial decision or driven by the desire of readers, but the increased focus on female clerks from a female perspective enhanced the creation of a collective identity amongst these railway workers and established their position within the ‘railway family’, whether male clerks were happy about that or not.

The success of the RCA campaign to organise women can be seen in the fact that in 1917 female members made up 10% of RCA membership, roughly 5000 members.⁵²⁶ However the membership was still divided over the employment of women in the inter-war period. An article entitled ‘Should women clerks make way for ex-servicemen?’ resulted in a heated debate on both sides, although the majority of

⁵²³ *The Railway Clerk*, 13, 151 (1916) pp.173-174

⁵²⁴ *The Railway Clerk*, 13, 152 (1916) pp.200-201

⁵²⁵ *The Railway Clerk*, 13, 155 (1916) p.278

⁵²⁶ *The Railway Clerk*, 14, 160 (1917) p.51

correspondence was split along gender lines with male clerks insisting that female clerks were working for “pin money” whilst “thousands with wives and children are walking the streets in search of employment, while married women with husbands to provide for them are still in the G.E head offices.” In contrast, female clerks argued that “many girls have suffered owing to the war, and are the sole support of widowed mothers whose sons were killed in action” and “some men ignore the fact that the necessities of life cost women as much as they do men.”⁵²⁷ Despite their claims that they desired female clerks to have equal pay for equal work, male clerks were still hostile to their female colleagues and it appears that for some, there was very little ‘family’ feeling amongst them.

The idea that male clerks needed to be encouraged to accept their female colleagues continued throughout the inter-war period with one female delegate at the Annual Conference in 1923 stating “Finally, to the men I should say: Don’t pass over the women in the service too lightly. Remember they have come to stay, and around their conditions yours will revolve. Give them a chance...”⁵²⁸ Another approach focused on encouraging male clerks in their role as fathers to ensure that their daughters were members of the union, “Many trade unionists who would never dream of being outside their own Union and who see their sons are educated in trade union principles are quite content that their own daughters should be non-unionists.”⁵²⁹ By encouraging male clerks to consider their own family relationships, the idea of the ‘railway family’ was being used to encourage male clerks to view female workers in a more sympathetic

⁵²⁷ *The Railway Service Journal*, 17, 204 (1920) pp.277-278

⁵²⁸ *The Railway Service Journal*, 20, 235 (1923) p.221

⁵²⁹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 23, 270 (1926) p.212

light. However, this also highlighted the fact that for many men, the true role of a woman was as a wife and mother, as one letter in 1932 stated, "A woman's true profession is that of Woman, and I pray that all efforts to transform it into anything else will be doomed to everlasting failure."⁵³⁰ These protestations were swiftly rebutted by female clerks stating that, "We can do very little to alter the Natural Order, but we can do a great deal to improve the Railway "Order"."⁵³¹ However, this attitude was one that was very deeply ingrained and for many railwaymen, who considered themselves the breadwinner, it was a challenge to the ideas they held about the traditional 'railway family'.

Female clerks also decided on a different tactic in their approach for inclusion into the 'railway family', which was to campaign for their own women's delegate on the Executive Committee (EC).⁵³² The RCA had grown into a union not only for clerks but other administrative and supervisory railway employees including stationmasters, who were granted their own EC member due to their perceived special needs. Female RCA members argued that they too had special needs that required the attention of their own committee member. In 1930, Miss Elsie Orman, an experienced RCA member was appointed as the first female EC member.⁵³³ This separate but equal status seemed to be the most harmonious approach that female RCA members undertook and the organisation of RCA women's conferences allowed a space for women members to discuss their own issues without coming into open conflict with male members. At one such Conference it was agreed that all districts would appoint a female organising

⁵³⁰ *The Railway Service Journal*, 29, 347 (1932) p.478

⁵³¹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 31, 369 (1934) p.380

⁵³² *The Railway Service Journal*, 20, 235 (1923) p.221

⁵³³ *The Railway Service Journal*, 27, 319 (1930) p.270

secretary whose duty it would be to organise the female clerks in her district, thus again keeping them separate from the male organising secretaries.⁵³⁴ The notion of 'separate spheres' was one that was used successfully by women's trade union auxiliaries, other women's organisations, and by women within their own families, and therefore did not negate the idea of the 'railway family' being used by the trade union and by RCA members. It was also the way that women were included within the trade union newspapers and magazines, with their own separate pages that allowed them to discuss issues which affected women and children within their own 'separate sphere'. As Patricia Hollis has argued in her work on women in local politics, "separate spheres...could be deployed in either conservative or radical ways".⁵³⁵

The challenge of large numbers of female workers was again raised with the advent of the Second World War in September 1939. However, the RCA encountered a further difficulty with their renewed calls for equal pay for equal work in order to protect male clerks. In 1920, the RCA had accepted a settlement with the railway companies which set the rates of pay for women that were not on an equal scale to men's rates of pay.⁵³⁶ The RCA promised to keep pushing for equal pay for female clerks but the momentum was lost in the inter-war years when other issues came to the fore. With the advent of greater numbers of female clerks, the RCA again sought to protect their male member's jobs and pay rates with calls for equal pay. Due to the settlement that they had accepted however, female clerks were placed on these lower pay scales and there was very little that the RCA were able to do to challenge this. The union called

⁵³⁴ *The Railway Service Journal*, 27, 323 (1930) p.418

⁵³⁵ Hollis, 'Women in Council', p.210

⁵³⁶ *The Railway Service Journal*, 17, 201 (1920) p.213

for a reclassification of female clerks as their roles and duties shifted and changed with the necessity of war work but railway companies continually failed to do this.⁵³⁷

Railway companies also stated that the evolution of clerical work meant that many women did jobs that had formerly been the province of men and therefore equal pay claims were not valid as these were now 'women's jobs'. According to railway companies, equal pay claims were "unsound on social grounds".⁵³⁸ Female organising secretaries found their efforts were hampered by these differential pay scales which prevented any line of promotion for women. A letter from a female clerk stated that recruiting would be made easier if the RCA emphasised that they would not settle for these differentials but wanted equal pay and prospects for all women.⁵³⁹ The RCA did attempt to do this through pamphlets, circulars and their newspaper and more female clerks were recruited into the union, however equal pay still remained elusive. Revised pay scales were introduced in 1944 and the EC stated that although they still wanted equal pay, "They are an attempt to bring a degree of equity into existing scales, and members may be assured that the utmost will be done to achieve that end."⁵⁴⁰ Even after the end of the war, the RCA were still campaigning for equal pay for female clerks but had not achieved their aims by Nationalisation in 1948. The RCA solution to increased numbers of female workers, of campaigning for equal pay for equal work, was intended to protect their male members rather than any attempt at true gender equality and as such, created more divisions amongst the 'railway family'.

⁵³⁷ *The Railway Service Journal*, 37, 436 (1940) p.105

⁵³⁸ *The Railway Service Journal*, 39, 459 (1942) p.52

⁵³⁹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 38, 456 (1941) p.293

⁵⁴⁰ *The Railway Service Journal*, 41, 482 (1944) p.35

The RCA were able to prevent married women from threatening the livelihoods of both their male and single female members during the inter-war period with a marriage bar that prohibited a married woman from continuing her employment. This caused a great deal of debate within the pages of *The Railway Clerk/The Railway Service Journal* with 'Melissa', the original correspondent on the woman's column, stating that "I have said over and over again that it is a pity for a woman not to keep up, after marriage, any work in which she has become proficient, if she can at the same time, from the joint earnings of herself and her husband, pay for proper help in the house."⁵⁴¹ RCA branches disagreed with this stance however, as in 1920 the Westminster branch proposed a Conference resolution that "no married women should be retained in the Company's service if her husband is in a position to maintain her."⁵⁴² The traditional version of the 'railway family', with husband as breadwinner and wife as home-maker was clearly preferential to male members of the RCA.

After the Second World War, this debate again raged with a particularly heated discussion at the 1947 Annual Conference where a resolution on removal of the marriage bar was proposed. This stated that the RCA could not just stand for equality of pay, they must also pursue an equal opportunity agenda. An amendment that married women should only be allowed to continue in exceptional circumstances was proposed, in order to protect single women. One delegated stated that, "If you carry this amendment," he said, "you will have liberty on your lips but tyranny in your hearts." The amendment was carried and the marriage bar was not lifted. Following this debate, a resolution on equal pay was discussed where one female member stated

⁵⁴¹ *The Railway Clerk*, 12, 141 (1915) p.215

⁵⁴² *The Railway Service Journal*, 17, 199 (1920) p.158

that ““Equal pay also means equal conditions. You have just passed a resolution that was hypocritical; now pass this one to atone.””⁵⁴³ This issue did not just split male and female clerks along gender lines but also divided married and single women and demonstrates how women’s work placed trade unions in particularly challenging positions for which the idea of the ‘railway family’ was of very little use to unite their diverse membership. From their dealings with women workers, it appears that the motif of the ‘railway family’ was at its most useful to trade unions when gender stereotypes were not being challenged and the idea of the ‘railway family’ co-existed alongside traditional notions of the nuclear family. Temporary work for unmarried women was permissible within the bounds of the ‘railway family’ but it did test the limits of male acceptance of working women.

4.3.2 The NUR and women workers

Prior to the First World War, women did work in a number of roles within the railway industry, for example they were employed as crossing keepers, carriage cleaners and waiting-room attendants.⁵⁴⁴ These roles were considered appropriately feminine because, for the most part, they mirrored the jobs that women would also undertake in the home, including cleaning and serving refreshments. Female employees were not permitted to become union members and did not feature in the pages of *The Railway Review*, even on those pages targeted towards women and children. The ASRS and the Railway Women’s Guild supported the efforts of women workers to organise stating that “Women cannot expect to get equal pay with men for

⁵⁴³ *The Railway Service Journal*, 44, 520 (1947) p.239

⁵⁴⁴ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p.5

equal work by merely asking for it on the ground of injustice...Women should organise, and compel equal payment on the strength of their organisation, and the damage it could inflict on those who refuse justice.”⁵⁴⁵ However, when it came to the organisation of female railway workers neither the ASRS or the RWG offered much, if any, support. In a report on a moral crusade against railway barmaids, the ASRS stated that, “If the petitioners would condescend to interview any of the refreshment room girls they will find that the most disagreeable experiences of the latter come from the private side of the bar, and not the customers’ side. They will tell of shockingly long hours of labour, of indignities placed upon them by suspicious and prying manageresses, and of interference with their private affairs which necessity alone compels them to submit to.”⁵⁴⁶ Despite understanding the struggles female railway refreshment room workers faced, there was no help offered to them by the union or any attempt to draw them into the ‘railway family’.

The Railway Review contained a number of conflicting messages for female railway workers up to 1914. An article in July 1905 suggested that the ASRS would amend their constitution to admit women, “with a platform of equal pay for equal work, whether the work is performed by men or women”.⁵⁴⁷ This suggestion was not enacted until the outbreak of the First World War when thousands of women entered the railway workplace. Prior to the First World War, *The Railway Review* did not appear overly hostile to the idea of female railway workers, although this ambivalence was only to those roles where women did not encroach onto men’s employment, pay and

⁵⁴⁵ *The Railway Review*, 2/8/1901 p7

⁵⁴⁶ *The Railway Review*, 26/8/1904 p8

⁵⁴⁷ *The Railway Review*, 7/7/1905, p9

prospects. Small articles commenting on the work of female clerks, train attendants and women “stationmasters” were not critical of the work these women undertook although in the case of the article about female stationmasters, the tone was condescending, “At Langford, near Maldon, Essex, a “stationmistress” reigns supreme”.⁵⁴⁸ The stations these women were in charge of were small, out of the way stations and the women named in the article were all married, indicating that they may have been given the positions because they were the wives of railwaymen and were assisting their husbands or were widows, and this was a way for the railway company to ‘take care’ of the ‘railway family’. Due to these factors the female stationmasters, although they were undertaking jobs that were predominantly men’s, were not viewed as a threat to any railwaymen.

However, with the outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 large numbers of railwaymen began to join up, leaving railway companies severely understaffed. They began to recruit female workers in positions previously held by men including porter, guard and cleaner.⁵⁴⁹ The NUR Executive Committee quickly realised that they needed to enrol these new wartime women workers into the trade union in order to protect the wages and working conditions of their male members. This was partly prompted by the fears of railwaymen, who stated within the pages of *The Railway Review* that, “It would be pure affectation to deny that the advent of girls on our railways has not created an atmosphere of profound uneasiness that tends to upset the recent smooth and harmonious relationship between the men and the companies’ headquarters. Not one man in ten thousand believes their presence is of a

⁵⁴⁸ *The Railway Review*, 13/7/1906, p11

⁵⁴⁹ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p.46

temporary duration, in view of the permanent structural alterations made for their accommodation...Our E.C. will be wise to deal firmly with this question, yet diplomatically.”⁵⁵⁰ The RWG shared their concerns, stating in their Conference resolution in May 1915 “That this Conference of the NURWG view with apprehension the introduction of female in place of male labour on railways, and urge the EC of the NUR to carefully watch the new developments, and to further safeguard the interests of all concerned by insisting that women shall be paid the same rate of wages as men when performing similar work.”⁵⁵¹ The previous ambivalence shown towards female railway workers dissipated when men’s pay and positions were being threatened. In this way, the traditional ‘railway family’ closed ranks and acted as an exclusionary force when it felt threatened, specifically when gender stereotypes were challenged and the breadwinner model was subverted.

Women were admitted into the NUR from June 1915 despite the concerns raised by some members.⁵⁵² The NUR argued that women must be given the minimum rate of pay that would be given to men due to the temporary nature of their employment. The union did not want low-paid women replacing men but the rank and file NUR members did not support women getting the same wages as they were entitled to. Female railway workers were also not eligible for the same war bonus as male workers, even though the NUR argued that they suffered just as much as male counterparts. The justification used by railway companies for the discrepancy was that women did not have the same responsibility to their families, either because they were

⁵⁵⁰ *The Railway Review*, 18/6/1915, p.2

⁵⁵¹ *The Railway Review*, 21/5/1915, p.7

⁵⁵² *The Railway Review*, 25/6/1915, p.4

single or were supported by a male worker who was designated as the breadwinner, even if this was not the case.⁵⁵³ The justification for wage disparity included the predominance of women in unskilled or low skilled jobs (such as carriage cleaners or pattern shop employees); and, most crucially for railway companies and trade unions, the temporary nature of women's work and their responsibility for family and domestic matters which necessitated their removal from the employment market.⁵⁵⁴

An article in *The Railway Review* reprinted from the *Railway Gazette* espoused the view that the NUR had done a great service to the men fighting at the Front as well as the men continuing to work on the railways in Britain by admitting women to their membership: "the National Union is to be congratulated on the adoption of a policy which has averted a potential cause of unrest in the transportation world."⁵⁵⁵ However, complaints continued to be voiced in *The Railway Review* about the roles women were undertaking and the way they were being treated. The North Eastern Railway Company was criticised for not providing female ticket collectors with uniforms but also for employing young women to undertake these jobs in the first instance, as the author considered that women acting as ticket collectors "crossing from one platform to the other on busy sections" to be a "reprehensible" practice which was too dangerous.⁵⁵⁶ Another example of this was the complaint by railwaymen on the London Brighton and South Coast railway about using women as passenger guards under the guise of the protection of "public safety" when in fact, it was also their pay

⁵⁵³ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p.358

⁵⁵⁴ Todd, Selina, *Young Women, Work and Family in England, 1918 - 1950* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2005) pp.51-54. These justifications are still considered some of the foremost reasons for the inequality of pay between men and women today.

⁵⁵⁵ *The Railway Review*, 13/8/1915, p.9

⁵⁵⁶ *The Railway Review*, 7/1/1916, p.3

and promotion prospects that they were concerned with.⁵⁵⁷ This exemplifies the way that the NUR treated female railway workers, viewing them as ‘damsels in distress’ in need of protection as part of the ‘railway family’ but also as continued threats to safety and to male railway workers.

After the end of the First World War, the union refused to support any of their female members who were dismissed, claiming that they had always known that their employment was temporary.⁵⁵⁸ Female clerks were the only section of the workforce who were permitted to remain in employment and a marriage bar was put in place that necessitated their resignation on marriage.⁵⁵⁹ Those women who did remain employed by the railway companies for a time after the end of the war were subject to verbal attacks by male railway workers, as an apology printed on the front page of *The Railway Review* demonstrates. Horace Bird, a foreman on the South East and Chatham railway apologised to Miss Jessie Jordan, ticket examiner, “for my unprovoked assault on her...and unreservedly apologise for and withdraw the statements I then made concerning her character and reputation”.⁵⁶⁰ Women who continued to work were considered to be taking jobs away from men who were returning from the war and were therefore deemed to be selfish and concerned with their own welfare, rather than that of the ‘railway family’.⁵⁶¹

Women did still continue to work in roles that they had undertaken before the war, as gate and crossing keepers, office cleaners and waiting room attendants. Nevertheless, debates about their right to work and to have the support of the NUR

⁵⁵⁷ *The Railway Review*, 6/4/1917, p.5

⁵⁵⁸ *The Railway Review*, 27/12/1918, p.6

⁵⁵⁹ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p.133

⁵⁶⁰ *The Railway Review*, 4/7/1919, p.1

⁵⁶¹ Grayzel, *Women and the First World War*, p.107

appeared occasionally in *The Railway Review* from the early 1920s onwards. For example after a settlement improving the working conditions for male gatekeepers, a female gatekeeper wrote in asking the NUR to support their rights.⁵⁶² The replies to this letter varied including one which stated that “This is an easy case to settle as the lady should not be employed by the company.”⁵⁶³ Although this letter represented the views held by some railwaymen, as long as female railway workers did not trespass into too many job roles or the higher grades of railway employment, they generally did not face too much of a backlash within *The Railway Review*, on the proviso that they were widowed or unmarried and not seeking to disturb the status quo. Women workers were encouraged to join the NUR in extraordinary circumstances in order to campaign for improvements in their own pay and conditions but also to support the ‘railway family’.⁵⁶⁴

The Second World War created a similar situation for railwaymen and the NUR as they saw another influx of female workers into the railway industry. An agreement was reached that replicated conditions placed upon women workers during the First World War – women were accepted into men’s roles on a temporary basis only.⁵⁶⁵ This did not mean that women were entitled to the same wages however, as a letter from a female waiting room attendant asked for a wage rise from their 24 shilling base rate as, “we have the responsibility of being bread winner of the home”.⁵⁶⁶ Equal pay for female railway workers again became a priority campaign for the NUR.⁵⁶⁷ Although the

⁵⁶² *The Railway Review*, 15/6/1923, p.12

⁵⁶³ *The Railway Review*, 22/6/1923, p.11

⁵⁶⁴ *The Railway Review*, 27/4/1934, p.5

⁵⁶⁵ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p.143

⁵⁶⁶ *The Railway Review*, 9/2/1940, p.14

⁵⁶⁷ *The Railway Review*, 5/7/1940, p.5 and 19/7/1940, p.4

NUR were able to negotiate equal pay for women taking over men's roles in conciliation grades after their probationary periods, they were not able to do the same for shopmen because, "when one had 37 unions involved, with sometimes 37 different policies and views, it was not easy to reconcile them and present a case to the other side which was watertight."⁵⁶⁸ Although railwaymen had an idea of what to expect in this situation, there was renewed criticism of female railway workers, especially when they were considered damaging to railwaymen's career prospects. One railwayman wrote to *The Railway Review* that, "I am given to understand that a woman's place was in the home, but that seems to be the last place in these so-called modern days."⁵⁶⁹

The main criticism focused on the promotion of women over men who had more training and experience, and the lack of attendance by female members at branch meetings as according to the NUR delegate at the RWG Conference in 1942, "regular attendance [at branch meetings] and punctuality were a prime necessity of railway service."⁵⁷⁰ Certain occupations were the focus of ire from railwaymen, especially female guards who were considered "unqualified" and lacking the necessary skills and training that men in these positions had taken years to come by.⁵⁷¹ Female signallers were also a target for criticism, again because these were considered high grade jobs which single women aimed "with the connivance of the company, of course, to oust a married man from his job."⁵⁷² These complaints focused on the precarious nature of the 'railway family' during war time, particularly on the assumption that single women did not have to take care of families as married railwaymen did. There was a concern

⁵⁶⁸ *The Railway Review*, 10/7/1942, p.3

⁵⁶⁹ *The Railway Review*, 22/11/1940, p.10

⁵⁷⁰ *The Railway Review*, 5/6/1942, p.4 and 3/7/1942, p.8

⁵⁷¹ *The Railway Review*, 6/11/1942, p.4

⁵⁷² *The Railway Review*, 28/7/1944, p.4

amongst some railwaymen that, despite the agreements, women would be retained after the end of the war, "The employment of women in industry has created a difficult post-war problem. The only solution is the elimination of female labour where suitable male labour is available."⁵⁷³ For most railwaymen, they did not have to go to these extreme lengths as many women removed themselves from railway employment from 1946. Again, complaints about women workers were reduced as their numbers decreased and the traditional 'railway family' re-established itself.

4.3.3 ASLEF and women workers

The ASLEF *Locomotive Journal* did not consider the employment of women in the railway industry to be a great threat to their members. In 1913, when the Great Western Railway Company began employing women as carriage cleaners at Old Oak Common for 15 shillings a week rather than the 21 shillings a week the men were paid, the *Journal* stated that "It is not unlikely that the women will have to go."⁵⁷⁴ It is not clear however, what action was taken by ASLEF against these carriage cleaners. As the lowest grade of employment in the union, cleaners did not often merit a mention in the *Locomotive Journal* although the employment structure of the railway industry meant that most firemen and drivers had begun their careers as cleaners. Even during the war, when women entered the manual grades of employment on the railways the Editor commented that "Female labour is becoming quite a feature of railway life...we shall soon have only the heavier labour left to the poor male kind. But we think it will be some time before even the most robust and clever of our lady friends will be found

⁵⁷³ *The Railway Review*, 29/9/1944, p.3

⁵⁷⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 26, 8 (1913) p.353

acting as shunters, drivers or firemen, or on the permanent way, although they may fill some of the chairs of directors boardrooms, with advantage to all concerned.”⁵⁷⁵ This statement from the Editor appears to suggest that those on the footplate, i.e. members of ASLEF, need not be concerned with the encroachment of female labour on their workplace as they were well protected by the difficult nature of the job which left it unsuitable for women.

This lack of concern was the reason ASLEF did not join in any of the negotiations about female labour and their pay, positions and working conditions during the First World War.⁵⁷⁶ It was only with the advent of conscription during the Second World War and the shortage of drivers and firemen that ASLEF displayed any sense that their members felt threatened by the introduction of female workers within their magazine. An article and letter, both appearing in the August 1942 issue, criticised any suggestion that women should be allowed to work on the footplate. The letter encouraged ASLEF to remain strong in the face of pressure from the NUR to accept female workers as footplate crew.⁵⁷⁷ ASLEF was successful in ensuring that women did not encroach onto the male-only space of the footplate until the 1970s and were one of the unions that held out the longest against female membership.⁵⁷⁸ Only the introduction of the Sex Discrimination Act on the 1st January 1975 paved the way for the employment of women on the same terms as men.⁵⁷⁹ London Underground Limited (LUL) became the first employer of a female driver in October 1978, whilst ASLEF’s first female member,

⁵⁷⁵ *Locomotive Journal*, 28, 6 (1915) p.260

⁵⁷⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 30, 5 (1917) p.151

⁵⁷⁷ *Locomotive Journal*, 55, 8 (1942) p.165 and p.179

⁵⁷⁸ Transport for London, <https://tfl.gov.uk/corporate/about-tfl/culture-and-heritage/londons-transport-a-history/women-in-transport> [20/07/2016]

⁵⁷⁹ The National Archives, ‘Sex Discrimination Act, 1975’
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1975/65> [11/1/2017]

a trainee driver for LUL, joined the union in April 1977. However, it took another five years, until February 1983, for British Rail to employ their first female train driver.⁵⁸⁰ Due to the lack of employment opportunities afforded to them on the footplate, women workers did not feature in any aspect of the idea of the 'railway family' as imagined by ASLEF. It was their women's trade union auxiliary, the ASLEF Women's Society that became the focus of women's involvement with the trade union and the idea of the 'railway family' and this will be examined in detail in Chapter 5

4.4 Conclusion

The idea of the 'railway family' was a more complex phenomenon for trade unions than it was for railway companies. It was not used to unite all trade union members from the three different unions, rather it was used to inspire sections of each individual union to come together. Men in different grades and working for different companies were encouraged to unite to fight for better pay and working conditions. The idea of the 'railway family' from the trade union perspective was most important in the way that it was used to create separate spaces for men and women. One reason for this was that the trade unions did not want non-working wives or the increasing number of female workers to have the same stake in the trade union as the fully paid-up male members; it was the men's wages and working conditions that the trade unions sought to defend in the face of any encroachment by railway companies or female labour. The idea of the 'railway family' did appear within the trade union newspapers but it appeared more often in connection with international trade unions

⁵⁸⁰ Wojtczak, *Railwaywomen*, p.283

in order to generate fraternal feeling and comradeship amongst workers in the same, or similar, industries and of the same class. The 'railway family' was also a key aspect in trade union dealings with the wives and children of their members. The trade union 'railway family' was a narrower and more clearly defined version of the nuclear family – they were very clear on who could work, for how long and at what point subverting gender norms became a challenge to the traditional notion of family and, in this respect, to the 'railway family'.

The three main railway trade unions, the NUR, ASLEF and the RCA, utilised the idea of the 'railway family' as an exclusionary force as well as an inclusive one, ensuring that railwaymen and their families were protected first and foremost, over the rights of women workers. Columns and pages in their newspaper drew the wives, sisters and mothers of railwaymen into the idea of the 'railway family' and encouraged them to share the fierce loyalty that their husbands, sons, brothers and fathers felt for the union. They created a 'separate sphere' for non-working women and another for female workers, at times placing these women into conflict with one another.

Women workers, one of the most challenging phenomena of the first half of the twentieth century for trade unions, were accepted into the 'railway family' only in times of extreme necessity. They were included in the idea of the 'railway family' when the numbers of female workers increased in order that these female railway workers did not threaten the pay and employment prospects of the railwaymen they were replacing. Each trade union treated this issue separately and in their own way, however the RCA's handling of female clerks acted as a blueprint for other trade unions. They encouraged women to join and campaigned for equal pay whilst also allowing their male members to register their displeasure at the threat women

workers posed to them in the pages of their newspaper. The RCA created separate spaces for female clerks by providing them with their own EC members, women-only conferences and sports and social facilities. The NUR only had to deal with women workers during the First and Second World Wars. They acted in a similar way to the RCA, although they did attempt to go one step further and draw women into their idea of the 'railway family' in the knowledge that these female workers had been guaranteed by the Government as temporary employees only. ASLEF in contrast were unconcerned about female workers because they encroached little onto their union and were only a minimal threat to their members. By being reluctantly included in the idea of the 'railway family' not only were women workers less threatening to railwaymen and their non-working wives but the trade unions also hoped that these working women would feel a bond towards their colleagues and their families and therefore not challenge the status quo. It was a fear of female workers and the threat they posed to male pay and promotion prospects that drove much of the criticism women workers faced within the pages of the trade union newspapers and excluded them from the narrative of the 'railway family' rather than an inherent misogyny amongst railwaymen.

Chapter 5. **‘SEPARATE SPHERES’: WOMEN’S TRADE UNION AUXILIARIES AND THE RAILWAY QUEEN**

One of the most important ways that railway trade unions encouraged women to engage with the idea of the ‘railway family’ was with the formation of women’s trade union auxiliaries. Auxiliaries were created to allow the wives and daughters of trade union railwaymen the opportunity to participate in union activities, such as fundraising, socialising and improving their political education without undermining the authority of the male-dominated trade union branches. The two auxiliaries associated with the railway trade unions, the ASRS/NUR Women’s Guild founded in 1900 and the ASLEF Women’s Society founded in 1924, were formed by women, for women but they were accepted and had a degree of support from the trade unions’ core male membership. This chapter will examine the role these auxiliaries played within their parent trade union and in relation to the wider ‘railway family’. It will also consider how the introduction of the office of the Railway Queen, chosen from amongst the daughters of railwaymen to represent the industry from 1925 onwards, provided further opportunities for the involvement of women in the railway industry and the ‘railway family’ in particular.

As Ardis Cameron has argued, it is important to consider non-wage-earners within the labour movement and in labour history. Women’s auxiliaries demonstrate “the extension of class consciousness outside the workplace” and into the homes and

families of those in the trade union movement.⁵⁸¹ Melinda Chateauvert also supports this argument in her work on the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters on the American railways stating that “Telling the women's side of the tale makes clear how gender mattered to both the women and the men.”⁵⁸² Studying trade union auxiliaries raises a number of questions about the role of women in trade unions and these are linked to the aims of the auxiliary itself. Was their role purely in the support of the union or was the recruitment and political education of women an important function in its own right? How independent were women’s auxiliaries from the male-dominated trade union and did this potential independence cause conflict with the union? This chapter will examine the Railway Women’s Guild and the ASLEF Women’s Society in order to address these questions.

The effect auxiliaries had on the women who were members, their immediate families and the local railway community is an important question to be considered. Research on North American and Australian women’s trade union auxiliaries suggests that they had a profound impact on the lives of their members and the ‘railway family’. It will be argued that in the eyes of the male trade union members, the primary function of the women’s auxiliaries was to support the political aims of the trade union and fundraise for union causes, particularly the Orphan Fund. The social side of the women’s auxiliaries was, for the male branch members, a by-product of this fundraising effort and more for the benefit of their wives than themselves.

⁵⁸¹ Cameron, Ardis, “Bread and Roses revisited: Women’s culture and working-class activism in the Lawrence strike of 1912” in Milkman, R., (ed.) *Women, Work and Protest. A century of US women’s labor history* (Routledge, Boston, 1985) p. 45

⁵⁸² Chateauvert, Melinda, *Marching Together: Women of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters* (University of Illinois Press, Chicago, 1998) p. XIII

For the women who were members of auxiliaries however, fundraising and socialising shaped their identities as quasi-trade union members and cemented their place within the idea of the 'railway family'. Education was an important facet of women's auxiliaries because members needed to understand the role of trade unions in the labour movement in order to better assist the trade union in their political endeavours. A greater understanding of local and national politics encouraged some branches of the NUR Women's Guild in particular to campaign on issues that affected the 'railway family', most prominently maternal and infant welfare and old age pensions. For some of the campaigns they were supported by their trade union brethren and for others they stood united with other working-class women's organisations such as the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's Labour League. For the trade unions, political education led to some unforeseen consequences, including a greater awareness of the issues facing women and the 'railway family'. For some women within the auxiliaries this drove a greater desire to effect change socially, politically and economically, and to cement their emerging independence and freedom from the patriarchal institutions by which they had been bound.

5.1 The history of women's trade union auxiliaries

The RWG and ASLEF Women's Society demonstrate one of the most important ways that the idea of the 'railway family' was used by trade unions in order to draw non-working women into the trade union structure and facilitate their support of each other and the wider 'railway family'. Women's trade union auxiliaries also played an important role in supporting their unions, with the political education of women and campaigning for women's and working-class rights. Between 1900 and 1948, there

were a number of women's trade union auxiliaries in North America and Australia that have been researched by historians yet there is very little literature about equivalent auxiliaries in Britain. There were very few official women's trade union auxiliaries in Britain contributing to the paucity of literature. Even within the NUR and ASLEF, their women's auxiliaries merit little consideration within the official histories of the organisations.⁵⁸³ The RWG and the ASLEF Women's Guild were not substantially different in their scope and the effect they were able to have on their respective unions and the wider railway community, however they did operate in distinctive ways and had differing priorities outside their role as supporters of their parent union.

Caroline Merithew argues that during the Depression in the USA, women became more involved with union matters. When the Mineworkers union split in the 1930s, wives formed a women's auxiliary in order to fight for their husbands and themselves – for “bread and freedom”.⁵⁸⁴ As attested by both Wolfson and Merithew, writing eighty years apart, unions were not eager to organise female workers but they were not opposed to the formation of auxiliaries by female relatives.⁵⁸⁵ Merithew views these auxiliaries as a way for women to become involved in political activism albeit as part of a class struggle rather than campaigning separately on women's issues.⁵⁸⁶ These issues did not have to be incompatible unless one was subsumed within the other. Women in auxiliaries did not usually challenge gender stereotypes but used the

⁵⁸³ For example, The Railway Women's Guild are the focus of less than half a page in Bagwell's voluminous *The Railwaymen* whilst the ASLEF Women's Society feature very little in McKillop's *The Lighted Flame*

⁵⁸⁴ Merithew, Caroline W., “‘We Were Not Ladies’”: Gender, Class and a Women's auxiliary's Battle for Mining Unionism' *Journal of Women's History*, 18, 2 (2006) p. 64

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 65 and Wolfson, Theresa, ‘Trade Union Activities of Women’, *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 142, Women in the Modern World (1929) p. 125

⁵⁸⁶ Merithew, “‘We Were Not Ladies’”, p. 67

ideology of 'separate spheres' to justify their involvement with trade unionism and political activism.⁵⁸⁷ A paper written by Miss James of the Swansea branch of the Railway Women's Guild was reproduced in *The Railway Review* in 1900 and was titled 'Woman and her sphere'. It argued that the education of women in trade unionism was important, and the Guild were well placed to do this, but there was a need for women to balance their public work with their home life.⁵⁸⁸

In her work on the political role of housewives in the Great Depression, Annelise Orleck has argued that in times of crisis for families, such as industrial disputes or economic difficulties, women accepted the sexual division of labour and the ideology of 'separate spheres' but realised they could not "fulfil their responsibilities to the home without leaving it."⁵⁸⁹ By working in the public sphere, working-class women were able to forge another aspect to their identities. Anne O'Brien has argued that the Mothers' Union in Australia "provided women with a sense of identity."⁵⁹⁰ The Mothers' Union emphasised the important role of women as mothers and it was from this that women were able to foster their identity. In a similar way to other political groups and trade unions, the Church chose to focus on the importance of women in the private, domestic sphere. In 1902, an Archbishop in Sydney identified "domestic Christianity" as a key function of female members of the Church.⁵⁹¹ Domestic issues featured in the role women played within trade unions and their auxiliaries: women could produce and educate the next generation of trade union members and this was a

⁵⁸⁷ Dennis, Michael, 'Chicago and the Little Steel strike' *Labor History*, 53, 2 (2012) p. 172

⁵⁸⁸ *The Railway Review*, 8/6/1900 p11

⁵⁸⁹ Orleck, Annelise, "'We are that mythical thing called the public': Militant Housewives during the Great Depression' *Feminist Studies*, 19, 1 (1993) p. 150

⁵⁹⁰ O'Brien, Anne, 'Militant mothers: faith, power and identity in the Mothers' Union in Sydney, 1896 – 1950' *Women's History Review*, 9, 1 (2000) p. 36

⁵⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 39

key facet of their identity as auxiliary members. In Britain, the Mothers' Union sought to influence Government policy on issues such as education and housing, which directly affected their members.⁵⁹² Women were judged to be uniquely placed to deal with these matters from their 'separate sphere' of the domestic world.

The RWG and the ASLEF Women's Society undertook important work during railway strikes that assisted the trade union and prevented many members of the 'railway family' from undue suffering. The varied campaigns that they supported, in conjunction with the trade unions and as independent women's groups, fostered a sense of 'separate spheres' as the RWG and ASLEF Women's Society tackled these from their unique perspective as women. The campaigns, and the way that the RWG and the ASLEF Women's Society organised and supported these will be discussed in 5.2 and 5.3. The idea of containing women within their 'separate sphere' was an important way that the railway trade unions utilised the idea of the 'railway family' – they provided women with their own space, their own 'imagined community' within the 'railway family', but they also wanted to ensure that it was a bounded community that did not threaten the dominance of male trade unionists. The way that the trade unions and women's auxiliaries negotiated these 'separate spheres' of the 'railway family' will be examined in this chapter. The role of the Railway Queen was, in some senses, a 'separate sphere' inhabited only by the women who undertook the role and her female retinue. However, it was a sphere that was controlled by the male dominated railway companies and trade unions. The functions and remit of the Railway Queen, and her effect on women and the 'railway family' will be discussed later in this chapter.

⁵⁹² Prochaska, F, 'A Mother's Country: Mother's meetings and family welfare in Britain, 1850 – 1950' *History*, 74, 242 (1989) p. 392

Female activism was not always viewed favourably, even where there was a longer tradition of auxiliary membership, such as in the USA. The leader of the United Mineworkers of America denounced the union men who “shove their women out on the picket line while they remained at home and did the cooking” at their Annual Conference in 1934.⁵⁹³ The members of this union’s auxiliary developed a militancy which took the form of picketing, protesting and even damaging property, as well as other non-violent methods.⁵⁹⁴ However, they did not renounce their domestic roles and continued to bond through the women’s page of the union journal over issues such as childcare, household problems and the shared concern over their husband’s profession.⁵⁹⁵

Merithew argues that through their role in the women’s auxiliary, as militants and persuasive organisers, mineworkers’ wives created a new identity for themselves, in terms of their shared part in the class struggle with men and their relationship as allies to their husbands, rather than their subordinates.⁵⁹⁶ The creation of a strong partnership between men and women and husbands and wives is also demonstrated by Dennis in his work on the Chicago steel strike of 1937. By working in auxiliaries, women realised that “we have more in common with our menfolks than we thought - we can work together for a better life.”⁵⁹⁷ The ASLEF Women’s Society was praised within the *Locomotive Journal* for their work for, and with, the members of ASLEF. On the 21st anniversary of their foundation, the Pontypool Women’s Society were lauded

⁵⁹³ UMW President John L. Lewis quoted in Merithew, “We Were Not Ladies”, p. 64

⁵⁹⁴ Orleck, “We are that mythical thing”, p. 162

⁵⁹⁵ Merithew, “We Were Not Ladies”, p. 71

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid., pp. 77 - 83

⁵⁹⁷ From a communist pamphlet. Johnstone, Jenny, *Women in Steel* (1937) in Dennis, ‘Chicago and the Little Steel Strike’, p. 174

as an example of “what the co-ordination of the men and women’s sections can do by helping one another and what a lot those branches without a women’s section are losing.”⁵⁹⁸

Language was of particular importance to women’s auxiliaries. They were concerned with the language that they used about themselves, as this was part of how they shaped their own identity. The language that others used to describe the auxiliaries was also key, as this reflected how they were viewed by trade unionists and those outside their respective union. An excellent example of this is discussed by Chateauvert with regard to the auxiliary of the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (BSCP). In 1938, the Women’s Economic Council of the BSCP was renamed the International Ladies’ Auxiliary Order. However, according to Chateauvert the name change from Women’s Economic Council weakened the position of the Ladies’ Auxiliary because ‘Ladies’ needed protection from men and therefore assumed a more subordinate position within the union.⁵⁹⁹ This redefinition as ‘Ladies’ required new rules for behaviour and etiquette – the way a member of the Ladies’ Auxiliary dressed was criticised if she did not conform.⁶⁰⁰ Formal teas were designed to raise funds for the Brotherhood and provide an educational message about trade unionism. Yet this educational aspect was often dispensed with as these teas provided a chance for auxiliary members to demonstrate their respectability and as Chateauvert argues, “Parties made trade unionism appear less threatening, less masculine, and more socially legitimate”.⁶⁰¹

⁵⁹⁸ *Locomotive Journal*, 59, 5 (1946) p.130

⁵⁹⁹ Chateauvert, *Marching Together*, p. 71

⁶⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 155

⁶⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 106

After their re-definition as 'Ladies', the auxiliary was forced to adopt a much more rigid programme of organisational activities and education than in their former model.⁶⁰² Generally most of the women in the Ladies' Auxiliary supported this change to their programme; however, a small minority "put up a spirited defence" of their perceived rights to equal membership of the union.⁶⁰³ Ultimately these women were thwarted and the more modest programme was accepted. These educational activities reinforced the role of a member of the Ladies' Auxiliary as a wife and mother concerned with domestic issues. In turn, this benefited the Brotherhood because, according to the President of the Ladies Auxiliaries of the BSCP, the labour movement relied on women "as consumers, as housewives, and as mothers."⁶⁰⁴ The language associated with the Ladies' Auxiliary was clearly important in defining their identity and their aims. The movement away from political campaigning brought the Ladies' Auxiliary more in line with other American women's auxiliaries, in terms of their scope and the impact they were able to have within the male parent union and the wider labour movement in general. The language utilised by the Railway Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society, to describe themselves and their relationship with the trade unions, was also crucial to establishing and maintaining their identity. The use of this language will be discussed later in this chapter.

There are very few women's trade union auxiliaries in Britain that have been significantly researched. Auxiliaries to political parties, including the Primrose League, the Women's Labour League and the Women's Socialist Circles emerged from the

⁶⁰² Ibid., p. 89

⁶⁰³ Ibid., p. 90

⁶⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 107

1880s. Some women advocated the need for separate women's groups to "ensure women's interests would not be neglected."⁶⁰⁵ Others like Hannah Mitchell preferred to remain with political parties that provided equal membership for women, as she claimed the Independent Labour Party did.⁶⁰⁶ Many of these political auxiliaries did not want to challenge the policies of their parent organisation because they were dependant on them.⁶⁰⁷ The political education of women was of key importance to auxiliaries as Karen Hunt has argued in her book on the Social Democratic Federation. The Women's Socialist Circles, formed in 1904, made education one of their explicit aims alongside fundraising and social entertainment.⁶⁰⁸ Hunt claims that fundraising and organising social activities were considered to be the most important by male members. For female members however, educating and inspiring their members towards political action was a key priority.⁶⁰⁹ It is clear that the aims of this auxiliary were different depending on whether it was being considered from the perspective of its female members or the male members of the Social Democratic Federation, who felt they were also invested in the auxiliary. The contested nature of auxiliaries is reflected in the way that the ASRS/NUR and ASLEF treated the members of the RWG and the ASLEF Women's Guild.

The Women's Co-operative Guild (WCG) was an auxiliary of the Co-operative Guild, a male-dominated organisation. It was defined by its General Secretary as "a

⁶⁰⁵ Hannam, June, 'Women in Politics' in Purvis, June (ed.) *Women's History Britain, 1850 – 1945* (Routledge, London, 1995) p. 228

⁶⁰⁶ Mitchell, Hannah, *The Hard Way Up* (Virago, London, 1977) p. 189

⁶⁰⁷ Hannam, 'Women in Politics' p. 230 and Collette, Christine, *For Labour and for women: The Women's Labour League, 1906-1918* (Manchester University Press, Manchester, 1989) p. 156

⁶⁰⁸ Hunt, Karen, *'Equivocal Feminists': The Social Democratic Federation and the woman question, 1884 – 1911* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1996) p. 227

⁶⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 224

married women's trade union".⁶¹⁰ Emphasising the role of women as consumers, this 'separate sphere' was utilised by the WCG because of their link to the Co-operative movement and the Co-operative stores, which relied on the support of the working-class housewife to sell products.⁶¹¹ As Gillian Scott argues, the WCG was amongst the best placed organisations in Britain to campaign for working-class women and tackle the issues women faced in the home and with their families because the Guild was run by, and for, working-class wives. The WCG drew its membership from a similar set of working-class women to the RWG and the ASLEF Women's Society. Unlike these auxiliaries however, the WCG started life as a non-party group with few political ambitions but as Scott states, "the Guild also became the organisational expression of a wide-ranging working-class Feminist agenda...it tackled issues of both class and gender..."⁶¹² The RWG and the ASLEF Women's Society were also able to express this Feminist agenda, primarily for the benefit of women within the 'railway family' and for members of their sex both locally and nationally. However, this was from a more limited position than the WCG as the latter was less constrained by the politics of their parent organisation.

The number of women's auxiliaries in North America far overshadows the number evident in Britain and this is reflected in the literature. However, their role was often less political. American auxiliaries were designated as fundraising bodies, creating a sense of community for the families of workers involved in industrial disputes and promoting and educating their members about the trade union

⁶¹⁰ Margaret Llewelyn Davies in Scott, Gillian, *Feminism and the politics of working women: The Women's Co-operative Guild, 1880 to the Second World War* (Routledge, London, 1998) p. 3

⁶¹¹ Ibid., p. 15

⁶¹² Ibid., p. 4

movement. There were some exceptions, as Melinda Chateauvert's work on the Ladies' Auxiliary of the BSCP has demonstrated, although the entry of the female members of this auxiliary into the political arena began only after many years of loyal support to their husbands' endeavours in the trade union movement. The Ladies' Auxiliary of the BSCP was also unusual because they used the notion of female respectability to enhance the citizenship rights of members whereas other auxiliaries, secure in their citizenship did not feel the need to do this; rather they concentrated on building their own class consciousness.⁶¹³ Militancy was acceptable during times of industrial dispute but the politicisation of wives and mothers created tensions about the role of women within the trade union movement. Gender politics featured very little amongst the auxiliaries of North America – members did not challenge their role in the domestic setting as wives and mothers; they based their right to become involved in the trade union movement on just those factors.

At their most basic, women's trade union auxiliaries functioned as subordinate groups for wives and female relatives of trade unionists to show their support for the trade union at times of industrial crisis. This support may have been fundraising, collecting donations of food and clothing, providing entertainment or boosting morale. At times, the female members of these groups even demonstrated their militancy by protesting on the picket line and joining marches. Without any autonomy, the auxiliaries struggled to pursue any issue that was not in line with their parent organisation. The Railway Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society also had to

⁶¹³ Chateauvert, *Marching Together*. Chateauvert's detailed and thorough analysis of the women's auxiliary to the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters demonstrates the conflict that arose when auxiliaries were presented with a choice to campaign and lend their support to issues that predominantly affected men and women separately.

deal with issues of identity and autonomy, however there are examples of certain branches being able to pursue campaigning on matters that were considered uniquely feminine, such as maternal and infant mortality, divorce reform and housing. The language utilised by auxiliaries was important in the way that they defined themselves and as a reflection of how others saw them. The foundations of the RWG and the ASLEF Women's Society, the campaigns that they supported and the ways in which they were deployed as an aspect of the 'railway family' will be examined in detail in the following sections.

5.2 The ASRS/NUR Railway Women's Guild

Turning exclusively to discuss the British railway industry, there were two women's trade union auxiliaries: the ASLEF Women's Society, formed in 1924 and the National Union of Railwaymen Women's Guild (RWG), formed in 1900 in order to promote "social intercourse amongst the wives and daughters of railway workers of the district; to render such assistance to any of its members as may be necessary; to co-operate with the local branch of the ASRS in any worthy object they may undertake."⁶¹⁴ The Guild exemplified the way that the NUR deployed the idea of the 'railway family'. By extending a form of trade union membership to the wives and daughters of unionised railwaymen, the union was actively attempting to include those women in the union and secure their loyalty. Primarily the Guild was intended to support their parent union; to care for the wives of trade union railwaymen and provide a way for them to socialise in a manner that the union deemed constructive.

⁶¹⁴ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, p. 227

However, their influence extended outside the sphere of railway trade unionism and the Railway Women's Guild supported local and national political campaigns that affected women and those invested in the idea of the 'railway family'.

As Benedict Anderson has argued, print media allowed for the greater development of 'imagined communities'.⁶¹⁵ Railway trade unions produced their own newspapers, available weekly for members to purchase that included elements for non-working wives and children. *The Railway Review* included a women's column, entitled 'Our Women's Corner', which ran every week. It provided a way for the Railway Women's Guild to organise Conferences and discuss political resolutions and campaigns, as well as advertising the meetings of groups that the Guild were affiliated with, such as the Women's Labour League (WLL). Their Annual Conferences were advertised in 'Our Women's Corner' and the Guild branches were encouraged to send resolutions into the column, which would then be taken to the Conference by Guild representatives.⁶¹⁶ The WLL were also keen to solicit the opinions of Guild members on their proposed new campaigns.⁶¹⁷ After the dissolution of the WLL and the creation of the Women's Sections of the Labour Party, Guild members were encouraged to join the Party and contribute resolutions for their Conference which were discussed and proposed to the main body of members.⁶¹⁸ This again ensured that women were contained within a 'separate sphere' of the Labour Party and mainly confined to discussing matters that affected women, predominantly the home and family.

⁶¹⁵ Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, p. 33

⁶¹⁶ *The Railway Review*, 20/01/1911, p. 6.

⁶¹⁷ *The Railway Review*, 26/05/1911, p. 7.

⁶¹⁸ *The Railway Review*, 8/2/1918, p.5

Encouraging the education of their members in trade union and wider labour issues was also a key aim of 'Our Women's Corner' and the column Editor, an RWG member herself, suggested pamphlets, articles and books that Guild members could read and discuss.⁶¹⁹ The RWG delegate at the NUR Annual Conference in 1938 stated that "Our menfolk sometimes think of the Guild as being only concerned with social activities, but we do many other things. We try to educate the women in Labour ideas and ideals and the work of the NUR."⁶²⁰ 'A thought for the week' was introduced on the Women's Page in 1934 (this page was an amalgamation of the Guild column and the 'Mainly for Women' column) which provided items for discussion at meetings that week, and thought-provoking vignettes to challenge all those who read the page, whether they were Guild members or not. These included, "Sisters, wake up! Christian England and people allowed to starve in a land of plenty. Demand work or full maintenance for all: Abolition of the Means Test: Lower rents for workers' houses: Raising of the school leaving age: Adequate pensions for all at 60 years of age, and pensioners taken out of industry to make room for the younger ones who are unemployed"⁶²¹ and more simply, "Why don't women join the Guild?"⁶²²

Speakers at Guild and NUR conferences and meetings often praised the Railway Women's Guild on the training for home and public life that they provided for members. This indicates the dual purpose that the Guild sought to fulfil with regard to the 'railway family': to support women in their roles as wives and mothers and to encourage them to campaign on behalf of the trade union, on issues that affected the

⁶¹⁹ *The Railway Review*, 16/02/1912, p. 7.

⁶²⁰ *The Railway Review*, 15/7/1938, p.4

⁶²¹ *The Railway Review*, 2/3/1934, p.7

⁶²² *The Railway Review*, 25/3/1934, p.7

‘railway family’ in particular.⁶²³ The fraternal delegate to the NUR Annual Conference in 1928, Mrs Roberts, emphasised that “Women had proved that they could still do their housework effectively and come out and take an interest in the things that mattered to everyone.”⁶²⁴ Despite the encouragement to participate fully in public civic life that Guild women were given, their duty to their husbands, family and home was also continuously stressed within the pages of *The Railway Review*, particularly on the ‘Mainly for Women’ page.

The members of individual branches of the Railway Women’s Guild may never have met those from other branches spread across the country, but an ‘imagined community’ was created through ‘Our Women’s Corner’ in *The Railway Review*. By including reports from branches, obituaries of prominent members and messages of congratulations, the column helped connect these women over large geographical distances. Focusing on the shared interests of the women in the Guild helped accentuate their common bonds. By 1921, the Railway Women’s Guild had 3299 members across the country in 84 branches and by 1936 this had risen to 5000.⁶²⁵ The idea that print media could foster a sense of an ‘imagined community’ amongst women’s auxiliaries was exemplified in both Britain and America. The Women’s Page included in the ASLEF *Locomotive Journal* from the Women’s Guild’s formation in 1924 and the Women’s Page in the *Illinois Miner*, published by members of the United Mine Workers of America from 1921 to 1931, discussed subjects which many women had in

⁶²³ *The Railway Review*, 04/07/1913, pp. 6 – 7.

⁶²⁴ *The Railway Review*, 13/7/1928, p.6

⁶²⁵ *The Railway Review*, 08/07/1921, p.10 and 17/7/1936, p.10

common including housework, children and the work of their associated trade union.⁶²⁶

The creation of a community and the maintenance of the trade union idea of the 'railway family' was exemplified in the way members of the branches of the Guild acted towards one another. Guild members who were in distress were offered support; other members visited those who were sick and offered monetary provisions in the event that they, or their husbands, could not work or their children were ill. For example, the Perth branch of the RWG paid £5 and 10 shillings for a member's false teeth and on another occasion gave a joint grant to an NUR branch member who had been out of work for six months.⁶²⁷ Railway Women's Guild members were also encouraged to support each other through 'Our Women's Corner', especially in difficult times such as the First World War or during labour unrest.⁶²⁸ Resolutions at Guild conferences were passed that reinforced the idea of the 'railway family' and particularly the integral concerns of women and children. Guild members were not afraid to propose resolutions that had the potential to raise controversial debates, especially if they were in support of other women or members of the 'railway family', for example a resolution in 1938 calling for the revision of Abortion Laws to allow for legal abortions for women for health and economic reasons.⁶²⁹ This resolution was possibly prompted by the formation of the Interdepartmental Committee on Abortion by the Government in 1937; and although the Labour Party did not participate in this inquiry, "there were

⁶²⁶ Merithew, "We Were Not Ladies", p. 71

⁶²⁷ Joint branches and RWG cashbook, May 1930, MS43/3/1 and Joint Orphan and Benevolent Fund minute book, 19/1/1947, MS43/2/1

⁶²⁸ *The Railway Review*, 21/08/1914, p. 6.

⁶²⁹ *The Railway Review*, 8/7/1938, p.7

requests made by local women's sections to present evidence to the Committee."⁶³⁰ These requests were ignored as the Labour Party refused to discuss abortion, so therefore resolutions for discussions at other conferences allowed women to air their views and contribute to the debate.⁶³¹

Abortion was, according to Jane Lewis, "probably the most important *female* initiative in family limitation throughout the period, particularly among the very poor."⁶³² Many women did not believe self-induced abortions to be illegal and it became an established part of the culture surrounding birth control and family limitation amongst working-class women.⁶³³ "Prosecutions for abortion doubled between 1900 and 1910 and doubled again during the next twenty years, but this may merely indicate more vigilance on the part of the authorities rather than increasing incidence."⁶³⁴ By campaigning to legalise abortions in certain cases, the Guild sought to protect women from prosecution for undertaking an established form of birth control within working-class culture that was often in order to protect their own health or that of their family by limiting the number of mouths they were required to feed. By taking care of their members, and non-members, the Guild were establishing the bonds of sisterhood and reinforcing the 'railway family'.

The language of sisterhood was used widely in 'Our Women's Corner', for example, "Sisters, do let us rise to this occasion and help these oppressed and down-

⁶³⁰ Brooke, Stephen, *Sexual Politics. Sexuality, Family Planning, and the British Left from the 1880s to the Present Day* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2011) p.105

⁶³¹ Ibid., p.106

⁶³² Lewis, Jane, *Women in England 1870-1950: Sexual Divisions and Social Change* (Wheatsheaf Books Ltd, Brighton, 1984) p.17

⁶³³ Ibid., p.18

⁶³⁴ Ibid., p.18

trodden workers in their fight for such a small demand.”⁶³⁵ The concept of a sisterhood was important as it stressed “the similarities of women’s secondary social and economic positions in all societies and in the family”.⁶³⁶ Expressed in terms of familial relationships, Elizabeth Fox Genovese has argued that there were two distinct ways that the concept of sisterhood could be utilised by women; it could be used “as a basis for seeking to maintain a separation between the competitive values of the world of men (the public-political sphere) and the nurturant values of the world of women (the private-domestic sphere)” or as “a means for political and economic action based upon the shared needs and experiences of women.”⁶³⁷ In terms of the women’s trade union auxiliaries, their sisterhood drew upon the shared experiences of women within the ‘railway family’ to mobilise them to support the trade union and each other through the creation of an ‘imagined community’.

Attempts were made through ‘Our Women’s Corner’ to draw in the wives and daughters of trade union railwaymen who were not members of their local Guild. Appeals were made to women to support their husbands and the union in all endeavours. This was particularly the case during periods of labour unrest but also during the First and Second World Wars. More women were working and they were entreated to join the union; married and non-working women were encouraged to join their local branch of the RWG. The Guild were upheld as an inspiration for other women who wished to form trade union auxiliaries as a letter from the Victorian Railways Union, Melbourne demonstrates in 1918, “I have no doubt at all that such an

⁶³⁵ *The Railway Review*, 6/6/1913, p.5

⁶³⁶ Dill, Bonnie Thornton, ‘Race, Class and Gender: Prospects for an All-Inclusive Sisterhood’, *Feminist Studies*, 9, 1 (1983) p.131

⁶³⁷ *Ibid.*, p.132

organisation can be of material benefit to the Trade Union movement, apart altogether from the excellent effect it will have socially and educationally amongst the women themselves.”⁶³⁸ This is an excellent example of how the idea of the ‘railway family’ extended across continents and was a supportive community for men, women and children in the fulfilment of their aims politically, socially and educationally.

However, there were letters of complaint from Guild members about the support they received from *The Railway Review* and the trade union. One Guild Executive Committee member wrote to the Editor of ‘Our Women’s Corner’ complaining about her visits to ASRS branch meetings to discuss the formation of new Guilds and the fact that she had to convince the trade union men that, “Guilds were not the gossiping shops some would have them believe, but real helps to the branches who worked with them.”⁶³⁹ This was again emphasised by the Guild delegate to the NUR Annual Conference in 1932, who insisted that Guild members did not gossip at their meetings.⁶⁴⁰ Gossip was a major concern for both men and women within trade unions and indicates the negative stereotypes that women members and associates were perceived to hold. The ASLEF *Locomotive Journal* also called on the wives of their members to refrain from regaling their husbands with the day’s gossip on their return home from work.⁶⁴¹ Gossip was a discrete social phenomenon through which women could bond, however using this term allowed men to denigrate women’s conversations. It could be applied to both trivial chats and more significant discussions. Melanie Tebbutt has argued that one of the reasons for men’s fear of gossip was down to the

⁶³⁸ *The Railway Review*, 18/10/1918, p.2

⁶³⁹ *The Railway Review*, 27/01/1911, p.6

⁶⁴⁰ *The Railway Review*, 15/7/1932, p.5

⁶⁴¹ *Locomotive Journal*, 32, 8 (1919) p.232

fact that it was primarily considered to be a collective women's activity which thus excluded men.⁶⁴² The negative stereotypes that persisted around women who were considered 'gossips' is one of the reasons why the Guild were conscious to emphasise that they were not "gossiping shops".⁶⁴³ By emphasising their hard work and distancing themselves from accusations of gossiping, Guild branches were attempting to allay railwaymen's fears about their role within trade union life and show that they bolstered the idea of the 'railway family'.

It took fourteen years for the NUR to officially recognise the Guild as an auxiliary organisation, with a delegation from the Guild attending the AGM of the NUR on the 18th June 1914 and putting a resolution to their Conference that applied for official recognition. This resolution was passed by fifty-two votes to three therefore the Guild were granted "permission to use the name 'National Union of Railway Women's Guild', and [the NUR] welcomes their co-operation in our efforts to advance the wellbeing of the general body of railway women."⁶⁴⁴ By using the term "railway women", the NUR were addressing the wives, daughters, mothers, sisters and widows of railwaymen and ensuring that the purpose of the Guild, to support the female members of the 'railway family', was crystallised in the official recognition of the Guild by the NUR. The length of time taken to officially recognise the Guild as an auxiliary of the union is an indication that the NUR were often not as wholehearted in their support of the Guild as was the reverse.

⁶⁴² Tebbutt, Melanie, *Women's talk? A social history of 'gossip' in working-class neighbourhoods, 1880 – 1960* (Scolar Press, Aldershot, 1995) p.9

⁶⁴³ Ibid., p.11

⁶⁴⁴ *The Railway Review*, 10/7/1914, p.7

Some members became disillusioned with the direction of the Railway Women's Guild after the end of the First World War, when membership and branch numbers were increasing. They wanted more space in *The Railway Review* and a paid organising secretary, similar to the NUR branches.⁶⁴⁵ This would have enabled the Guild to increase their membership and their political output, both for the trade union and for the political issues that they sought to campaign upon. This support from the trade union, especially any form of financial support, was slow in coming. At their Annual Conference in 1930, one Guild delegate complained that "The ASLEF recognised their women's value by a large annual grant."⁶⁴⁶ In 1936, the NUR finally agreed to grant an annual subsidy of £100 to the Guild, fostering greater links with the Guild but also curtailing some of their independence as they now relied on the NUR for financial support.⁶⁴⁷ This was not in any way a significant amount of money and would not have enabled the Guild to expand or pay an organising secretary as they had hoped.

However, the NUR did recognise that the Guild was a boon to their organisation and helped greatly with the organisation of non-working women. An article in *The Railway Review* in September 1921 stated that the Guild "forms a valuable adjunct to our movement and tends to focus the interest of our wives on Trade Unionism...the time is ripe for members of the NUR to regard the organisation of their wives as something of mightier import than a mere sewing class or sentimental ally, particularly useful in tea-fights and Orphan Fund appeals."⁶⁴⁸ It is interesting to note that it was not until after the end of the First World War, when women were emerging as a more

⁶⁴⁵ *The Railway Review*, 03/06/1921, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁶ *The Railway Review*, 27/6/1930, p.3

⁶⁴⁷ *The Railway Review*, 03/01/1936, p.7

⁶⁴⁸ *The Railway Review*, 30/9/1921, p.4

potent force politically, socially and economically, that the NUR considered the benefits of having an auxiliary above and beyond the traditional model of a social and fundraising body. An article entitled 'Our branches at Work' indicated that, "branches that have a Women's Guild seem to be far more enterprising and energetic than those that possess none."⁶⁴⁹ The organisational capabilities of Guild members were rarely questioned by the NUR, and it was these qualities, such as keeping order and being "capable" that were chosen as vignettes to represent the Guild members. Their knowledge (through Guild education) and generosity was also highlighted.

Supporting the NUR during strikes and labour unrest was an important way that the RWG were able to demonstrate their co-operation with the union. After the General Strike in 1926, 'Our Women's Corner' stated that participation in the strike "proved our unity" with the men's branches.⁶⁵⁰ The difficulties faced during the General Strike bonded members of the 'railway family' together as "We have made many friends during the strenuous time passed through".⁶⁵¹ It was crucial for the Guild to stake their claim to greater support from the NUR because of their actions but also to extend the 'imagined community' of the 'railway family' even further, interacting with other women's organisations and trade unions outside the confines of the NUR.

5.2.1 The RWG and women workers

In contrast to their support of female workers in other industries, during the First World War the Railway Women's Guild was relatively hostile to female railway

⁶⁴⁹ *The Railway Review*, 9/2/1923, p.11

⁶⁵⁰ *The Railway Review*, 21/5/1926, p.10

⁶⁵¹ *The Railway Review*, 18/6/1926, p.11

workers. This was due to their fear that their husbands would find themselves replaced by female labour as women's wages were much lower than men's. As it became clear that railway companies would continue to employ women as railway workers, especially as the war progressed and conscription was introduced, the Railway Women's Guild along with the NUR, campaigned for equal pay for women and urged them to join the union. In this way, the jobs of Guild members' husbands would be protected if women earned the same wages as their male counterparts. A resolution at their Annual Conference in 1915 stated that, "this Conference of the NURWG view with apprehension the introduction of female in place of male labour on the railways, and urge the EC of the NUR to watch carefully the new developments, and to further safeguard the interests of all concerned by insisting that women be paid at the same rate of wages as men when performing similar work."⁶⁵² This was the same tactic that the RCA used in their dealings with female workers, as discussed in Chapter 4, and was designed to protect male railway workers rather than extend the rights of female workers.

This presents something of a contradiction when considered against the fact that Mrs E. Webb, General Secretary of the RWG was presented with a gold medal by the TUC in 1919 "for useful work done amongst women in the interests of Trade Unionism".⁶⁵³ The RWG and its members were being rewarded for supporting the union at all costs, even if this pitted them against other women within the 'railway family'. This is not to say that the Guild were opposed to women undertaking work, as they did encourage all working women to organise into trade unions. Rather, they

⁶⁵² *The Railway Review*, 21/05/1915, p. 6.

⁶⁵³ *The Railway Review*, 17/9/1926, p.11

wanted to guarantee their husband's jobs and by extension their own family's security. At times, Guild policy towards women appeared inconsistent. This was also the case for a number of other women's trade union auxiliaries, such as the Ladies' Auxiliary of the BSCP in the USA. Although working women were permitted to join the Ladies' Auxiliary, they were considered to be temporary workers with few rights.⁶⁵⁴

Despite the fact that the RWG supported the enfranchisement of women, a resolution on the repeal of the Cat and Mouse Act in 1913, which released suffragette hunger strikers until they were strong enough to be returned to prison, was defeated after a "heated discussion".⁶⁵⁵ In 1936, a resolution was passed allowing female NUR members to join the Guild because, "if a woman railway employee was interested enough to join the NUR she should at least be able to join the railway women's organisation, as probably she would not desire to attend the men's meetings."⁶⁵⁶ This was a conciliatory measure to the women they often excluded and sometimes worked against, and extended to them an invitation to join the trade union 'railway family'. However, this resolution detracted from the idea that women workers were joining the trade union to secure their own interests and assumed that they would not feel comfortable attending meetings with men, despite the fact that they were colleagues and fellow union members.

⁶⁵⁴ Chateauvert, *Marching Together*, p. XII

⁶⁵⁵ *The Railway Review*, 11/07/1913, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁶ *The Railway Review*, 3/7/1936, p.10

5.2.2 Sources for the Railway Women's Guild

Local sources for the Railway Women's Guild are few and far between; the minutebooks available often focus on the philanthropic and social work undertaken by the Guild, rather than their political efforts that were described in slightly more detail in 'Our Women's Corner'. The records for Perth Railway Women's Guild, held at Perth and Kinross Archives, exist from 1929 to 1959 and include the Railway Women's Guild cashbook, the minutebook of the Joint Orphan Fund Committee and the Perth NUR No.1 Branch minutebook. It is clear from these sources that the Guild branch in Perth was primarily concerned with fundraising for the Orphan Fund and the Benevolent Fund and arranging social events, particularly whist drives and dances. By 1944, the NUR and RWG in Perth were able to use the local cinema to show a series of films in order to raise money - £168 8s and 5d was raised for the Orphan Fund by these screenings.⁶⁵⁷ Children were also encouraged to help with the fundraising efforts, in keeping with their inclusion within the idea of the 'railway family'. They were even able to increase the amount collected on Flower Day (sometimes called Flag Day in other areas), an annual event in which fundraisers sold flowers in aid of the Orphan Fund and a "special tribute was paid to the children for this splendid achievement."⁶⁵⁸

Not all those within the trade union were so supportive however, and a letter directed at the male members of Perth No.1 and No.2 branches criticised them for their lack of attendance at joint meetings and functions designed to assist the 'railway family' in times of need.⁶⁵⁹ The Perth NUR No.1 branch minutebooks show that the branch was

⁶⁵⁷ Joint Orphan Fund Minute book, 17/12/1944, MS43/2/1

⁶⁵⁸ Joint Orphan Fund Minute book, 29/7/1945, MS43/2/1

⁶⁵⁹ Joint Orphan Fund Minute book, 1/9/1946, MS43/2/1

often invited to a number of RWG events including their annual Burns Night Supper, their sales of work and socials.⁶⁶⁰ When branch members did attend the RWG socials they commented that they were provided with a “good evening’s entertainment.”⁶⁶¹ A delegate from the NUR No.1 branch also attended the Scottish Railway Women’s Guild district council meeting when the Guild National President was present.⁶⁶² In the late 1930s, the Guild branch appealed to both Perth No.1 and No.2 branches for financial assistance and help in recruiting new female members and honorary members indicating that the Guild in Perth relied on the parent branches for support although according to the minutebooks, this was not immediately forthcoming.⁶⁶³

In a more extreme step, the Doncaster branch of the ASRS split over their support of the local Guild branch and created Doncaster No.1 and Doncaster No.2 branches. The issue was over the admittance of non-members wives into the Guild, as some ASRS members argued that these women should not be permitted to join, whilst others stated that this was an important way in which the Guild was able to encourage railwaymen to join the union.⁶⁶⁴ Ultimately, the acrimony led to a split over this issue and those who were keen to work with the Guild gravitated towards Doncaster No.2 branch whilst those who did not remained in Doncaster No.1 branch. This case appears to be an anomaly as the vast majority of NUR branches and their members were supportive of the work of the Guild. However, there were a number of concerns that

⁶⁶⁰ Perth NUR No. 1 branch minutebook, 21/1/1934 and 29/4/1934 MS43/1/2 and 16/4/1933, MS43/1/1

⁶⁶¹ Perth NUR No.1 branch minutebook, 12/5/1935, MS43/1/2

⁶⁶² Perth NUR No.1 branch minutebook, 27/9/1936, MS43/1/2

⁶⁶³ Perth NUR No.1 branch minutebook, 8/5/1938 and 15/1/1939, MS43/1/3

⁶⁶⁴ A series of letters were published in *The Railway Review* between July 1901 and January 1902 which articulated the arguments of railwaymen in the Doncaster branch, Guild members and others about the role of the Guild and the ways in which they could, or should, support the union.

emerged throughout the period about the role of the Guild, how much support they were entitled to and what work they should be undertaking.

The Perth Railway Women's Guild branch represented the traditional role of a women's trade union auxiliary, which was demonstrated in many of the examples from the USA. It was mostly concerned with fundraising for the parent union and organising socials and events for their members. This model was beneficial for railwaymen's wives and daughters because it provided them with a support structure, education in trade union issues and the opportunity to socialise. At these social events, it was possible for women to discuss the positive and negative aspects of life within the railway industry and access any help (either financial or personal) that they required. This extended the idea of the 'railway family' away from nuclear families to a larger group of men and women linked both locally and nationally through the railway industry.

Although there is little evidence to suggest that the Perth branch of the Railway Women's Guild was involved in local and national political campaigning, the sources available mainly concern the male branches and were primarily written from their point of view, and thus they emphasise what the NUR considered the primary functions of the Guild to be: socialising and fundraising. The Perth RWG branch worked closely with the two NUR branches particularly in relation to the Orphan Fund and the Benevolent Fund but this relationship was rather one-way. When assistance was requested from the Guild branches financially or with help to increase their membership, this was withheld or delayed.

5.2.3 The RWG and their political campaigns

It is possible to discern some of the political campaigning that a number of Guild branches undertook from their column in *The Railway Review* and the issues that Guild women supported more generally. Before each AGM, topics for discussion and resolutions were proposed on a variety of different issues, many of which affected women and the 'railway family'. Examples of these resolutions included the need for more housing, to allow Doctors to provide information on birth control, pensions at 65 and nursery provision for young children.⁶⁶⁵ Resolutions were specifically worded to reflect the concerns that members held and the ways that they wanted the Government to address these, for example, "That in view of the proved ill effects upon the health and morals of the community of the bad and crowded housing conditions under which so many of the population are obliged to live, the Conference calls upon the Government for legislation to compel municipalities themselves to provide homes for the workers, and demands that such homes shall contain separate sleeping accommodation for children of both sexes and bathing accommodation sufficient to enable all families to live in decency and comfort."⁶⁶⁶ These resolutions not only focused on general recommendations but contained specific clauses that represented the particular concerns of women: for themselves, their own families and for other families.

According to a delegate at one Guild Conference, "motherhood was the most dangerous trade in the country."⁶⁶⁷ Members of the Guild were encouraged to stand for

⁶⁶⁵ *The Railway Review*, 23/7/1926, p.3 and 29/6/1928, p.12

⁶⁶⁶ *The Railway Review*, 25/4/1913, p.7

⁶⁶⁷ *The Railway Review*, 29/6/1928, p.12

election as Poor Law Guardians because “There are no bodies on which women of the working class are needed more, especially in looking after the children, the aged, and the women inmates of the workhouses.”⁶⁶⁸ The first female Poor Law Guardian was elected in 1875 and by 1910 there were 1655 female Guardians across the county. According to Lewis, “women were inclined to favour the strict administration of outdoor relief, although they sought substantial improvements in matters such as diet and the provision of clean sheets and underclothing inside the workhouse.”⁶⁶⁹ The Railway Women’s Guild were also amongst the founding members of the Women’s Labour League (WLL), which later became the Women’s Section of the Labour Party in 1918.⁶⁷⁰ Both the Guild and the WLL campaigned on issues of social policy that directly affected women and their families.⁶⁷¹ Guild members were often directed to support specific campaigns that the WLL were championing, for instance, “The branches of our organisation are asked to co-operate with the WLL in a campaign which has been set on foot for saving the lives and raising the standard of health of little children.”⁶⁷²

However, it was the members of local branches who decided their own priorities and many branches did not publish details of their political campaigning in ‘Our Women’s Corner’, instead focusing on their work with the union. Small snippets of local branch campaigning did occasionally appear, for example in 1913, “The newly-opened Guild at Ormskirk has started a local campaign of propaganda, and the members are distributing 10,000 leaflets on such subjects as “Social Reforms,” “Party Politics,” “The International Working-Class Movement,” and also a white list of traders

⁶⁶⁸ *The Railway Review*, 18/4/1913, p.7

⁶⁶⁹ Lewis, *Women in England*, p.94

⁶⁷⁰ Graves, *Labour Women*, p.22

⁶⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p.8

⁶⁷² *The Railway Review*, 7/11/1913, p.5

who are deserving of the support of organised labour in Ormskirk and district.”⁶⁷³ The topics discussed in these leaflets did mirror the concerns of NUR and therefore this propaganda campaign was supportive of the union, rather than a way for the Guild to publicly campaign on issues which affected women and children exclusively. Without many articles on their political campaigning, it is difficult to comprehend the scale of the Railway Women’s Guild political activities. One reason for this may have been that they wished these political activities, which might have been controversial to some members of their associated male branches, to remain out of the pages of *The Railway Review* and therefore out of sight and mind of members of the NUR. In Chapter 6 a thorough study of the Railway Women’s Guild in Gloucester will discuss their political campaigns which are detailed in their minutebooks. These do not suggest that the Gloucester Guild concealed their campaigns from their local NUR branch, but neither do they suggest that the NUR branch was consulted or gave their blessing to all of the Guild’s campaigns.

5.3 The ASLEF Women’s Society

The Associated Society of Locomotive Engineers and Firemen (ASLEF) Women’s Guild was founded in 1924 on the cessation of a strike by members of the union. In a similar way to some of the other women’s auxiliaries discussed in this chapter, the auxiliary was formed following a period of crisis for the union. The wife of the ASLEF General Secretary, Mrs Annie Bromley, wrote to the wives of members after the resolution of the strike, a letter that was published in the *Locomotive Journal*,

⁶⁷³ *The Railway Review*, 12/9/1913, p.6

stating that “Since the splendid assistance given by our womenfolk in the recent strike, many ASLEF women have intimated to me that they are anxious to see the formation of an ASLEF Women’s Guild, believing that such an organisation would be a tremendous help to our men in any future struggle, or even in times of peace, in helping the men to be good, earnest Trade Unionists.”⁶⁷⁴ This idea was viewed favourably by a large number of the wives of ASLEF members, especially as it was suggested by one of their own – a wife, a mother and a member of the ‘railway family’. ASLEF women’s auxiliary branches were formed over the following months and plans were put in place to create a wider ASLEF Women’s Society, linking branches in an ‘imagined community’. This was achieved in August 1924 and the Society was granted £500 by ASLEF to pay for initial start-up expenses.⁶⁷⁵ This was a much larger grant than any given to the Railway Women’s Guild by the NUR and was an important way that ASLEF demonstrated their support for their women’s auxiliary and the idea of the ‘railway family’.

The first page for women in the *Locomotive Journal*, ‘Our Women’s Page’, appeared in June 1924 and continued monthly up to 1948 and beyond. It typically featured a letter from the General Secretary of the Women’s Society and reports from different branches. The main aims of the Society were to fundraise for the trade union and for the Orphan Fund; to organise events to encourage socialising between trade union men and their wives and families; and to educate women in the key principles of trade unionism and the labour movement. The Women’s Society was run in a very similar way to the trade union and the contribution of one penny a week that the

⁶⁷⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 37, 4 (1924) p.150

⁶⁷⁵ McKillop, *The Lighted Flame*, p. 162

women paid as membership of the Society was put towards sickness benefits (for a member or her husband), a marriage dowry payment of £1 for unmarried members, maternity payments and discounted entry into the railwaywomen's convalescent homes.⁶⁷⁶ Thus membership of the ASLEF Women's Society provided monetary benefits to its members that were designed to help improve their health and welfare and support the idea of the 'railway family'.

One of the most important ways that the ASLEF Women's Society contributed to the idea of the 'railway family' was through the creation of a "sisterhood" that was fashioned amongst its members.⁶⁷⁷ The use of this particular word is important; the term 'brotherhood' was often used to describe the way that male trade union members were bonded together within the 'railway family'. To use it to describe the ASLEF Women's Society ascribes to them a similar sibling status within the ASLEF idea of the 'railway family'. It was able to do this through 'Our Women's Page', spreading news of fundraising successes, happy occasions and sad ones. Individual branches also created smaller, local communities of Women's Society members who met regularly and enjoyed tea and cake, outings and dances as well as discussing trade union and wider political issues. The benefits system of the ASLEF Women's Society encouraged the sentiment of sisterhood because members knew they could rely on each other as like-minded individuals with similar experiences, and the Society, to provide in times of distress.

This sisterhood was extended internationally in a similar vein to the international co-operation and fraternity that existed amongst railway trade unions.

⁶⁷⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 3 (1925) p.91

⁶⁷⁷ *Locomotive Journal*, 49, 1 (1936) p.45

This was demonstrated most pertinently in the latter half of the 1930s and during the Second World War, when the ASLEF Women's Society reached out to women in the USSR and Spain. The Railway Queen travelled to the USSR in 1936 and took a message "To the Railway Women Workers, and to the Wives and Families of the Railwaymen of that Country" which emphasised the desire of the ASLEF Women's Society for closer co-operation and friendship in order to achieve world peace and disarmament.⁶⁷⁸ The ASLEF Women's Society shared these ideals with their parent union and this message not only conveyed their desire to create international links with other women in the railway industry, and thus extend the idea of the 'railway family' across international boundaries, but also to demonstrate their support for the aims of ASLEF. Russian railwaywomen and the wives of railwaymen responded in 1942 with a call to the members of the ASLEF Women's Society to follow their example and be strong in the face of fascism, in order to bring about its defeat.⁶⁷⁹ During the Spanish Civil War, the Women's Society gave gifts of money and knitted garments to support the women and children affected by the war, extending their international influence outside the railway industry and into causes supported by ASLEF and the wider labour movement.⁶⁸⁰

The ASLEF Women's Society were, possibly unexpectedly from the ASLEF point of view, very successful in their fundraising aims which were threefold. Profits from social and fundraising events were split between the Central Fund, which was responsible for ensuring members' benefits were paid, and the Orphan Fund. After the

⁶⁷⁸ *Locomotive Journal*, 49, 4 (1936) p.220

⁶⁷⁹ *Locomotive Journal*, 55, 1 (1942) p.16

⁶⁸⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 49, 12 (1936) p.699

General Strike in 1926 the Women's Society also raised money for the ASLEF Protection Fund, which was depleted by strike payments. The Society were determined to pay back their £500 start-up loan to replenish this Fund.⁶⁸¹ The ASLEF General Secretary wrote to the Society in 1928, thanking them for their fundraising efforts over the past four years.⁶⁸² In just two years, from 1926 when they committed to paying into the Protection Fund, the Women's Society was able to raise £502 2s and 7d for the Orphan Fund and £199 4s and 6d for the Protection Fund.⁶⁸³

The General Secretary of the Women's Society in her letter to all members on 'Our Women's Page' in June 1936 designated the majority of the fundraising to be for widows and orphans. They were encouraged to participate in the Society's socials and outings and this was made possible as their expenses were paid for out of Society funds. According to the General Secretary, "the real object of our Society, which is to give a helping hand to those less fortunate than ourselves."⁶⁸⁴ Again the idea of the 'railway family' is in evidence here as the Society was seeking to care for those who were struggling, through illness, death or industrial unrest by raising enough money to be able to support them financially or with practical items paid through Society subscriptions. They were employing a form of 'family welfare' rather than the industrial welfare that railwaymen were familiar with from their dealings with railway companies and trade unions. This welfare was controlled by the female members rather than any institutions.

⁶⁸¹ *Locomotive Journal*, 39, 6 (1926) p.286

⁶⁸² *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 7 (1928) p.362

⁶⁸³ *Locomotive Journal*, 43, 6 (1930) p.261

⁶⁸⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 49, 6 (1936) p.338

In contrast to the lukewarm support the NUR Railway Women's Guild sometimes received from their parent union, the ASLEF Women's Society was considered especially useful and a worthwhile endeavour for all wives and daughters of ASLEF railwaymen. In an article about 'Widows Pensions and Family Endowment', the author described "a hundred and one ways" that the Women's Society were useful to the trade union, including everything "from whist drives to blackleg hunts."⁶⁸⁵ There is no evidence that Women's Society members actually hunted down blacklegs during strikes, however to ascribe to them this mythical status promoted the Guild to a more superior position away from just a social and fundraising entity to an auxiliary that was of great political benefit to the trade union. Although the language of the idea of the 'railway family' did not appear as frequently in the *Locomotive Journal*, this support for the Women's Society was one way that ASLEF were able to demonstrate their commitment to the idea of the 'railway family' and the ways that they utilised this idea. Fundraising, organising social functions and supporting the trade union in their endeavours particularly in times of industrial unrest were the key features that the ASLEF parent union found to be most desirable about the Women's Society. During the General Strike, the Women's Society was considered an excellent vehicle to support the union as "All kinds of functions were arranged to keep the strikers happy and together, cases of need were visited and assisted financially."⁶⁸⁶ The trade union were utilising their auxiliary "to extract compliance of individuals or groups to some ideal standard

⁶⁸⁵ *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 6 (1925) p.254

⁶⁸⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 39, 6 (1926) p.265

of conduct” especially during strikes, which were key to securing the gains in pay and conditions that ASLEF were fighting for throughout this period.⁶⁸⁷

It was not until 1927, three years after the Society was first formed, that any criticism was levelled at the Women’s Society within the *Locomotive Journal*. A letter, written by Mr Bocket, a member of the Hornsey branch of ASLEF, questioned the purpose of the Women’s Society, the space their page took up within the Journal and the ‘wages’ they paid to their General Secretary, Mrs Bromley. The following month, ‘Our Women’s Page’ featured a letter from Mrs Bromley, refuting the claims she was paid a wage, instead stating that she was paid an “honorarium” to cover her expenses, which including travelling across the country to open branches, visit District Conferences and attend important fundraising events. The space ‘Our Women’s Page’ was given in the *Locomotive Journal* was balanced by the fact that more women were reading the *Journal* and thus increasing the sales and also the advertising revenue, with more adverts included which targeted women and families. Most of the branch reports for January 1928 replied to Mr Bocket’s letter, justifying the good work the Society did for the union and its members.⁶⁸⁸ This was the only overt criticism within the *Locomotive Journal* that the Women’s Society faced, since more often letters included praise for the helpfulness of the Society, or comments on the enjoyment of social events.⁶⁸⁹ Ensuring that the Women’s Society remained uncontroversial, with any elements of non-trade union political campaigning that they undertook kept off the pages of the *Locomotive Journal*, was one way that criticism could be deflected. As long

⁶⁸⁷ Chriss, *Social Control. An Introduction*, p.1

⁶⁸⁸ *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 1 (1928) p.36

⁶⁸⁹ *Locomotive Journal*, 43, 5 (1932) p.235

as the majority of members supported the Women's Society and saw their value, criticism such as Brother Bocket's could be refuted.

Political education was a key aim of both the trade union and its women's auxiliary, as the letter from the General Secretary on 'Our Women's Page' demonstrated, "I appeal to our members to take a keener interest in the Trade Union and Political movements, for it is not until we know their power that we realise how much our lives are governed by them."⁶⁹⁰ The letter from the President of the Women's Society on 'Our Women's Page' often provided branches with a focus for their gatherings and advice on how to conduct interesting and informative branch meetings. The winter season, without sports clubs and competitions and a preference for indoor activities, was when the Women's Society was encouraged to push their social and educational agenda.⁶⁹¹ Bringing in visiting speakers, hearing papers from members, organising socials and holding sewing and knitting parties were ways that meetings could be varied in order to keep members interested and attendances up.⁶⁹² The President of the Women's Society was determined that the female members of the Society be treated on an equal footing to the male members of ASLEF and insisted that when men held an open meeting, they should ensure that women were invited because "we have got past the Victorian days, when the woman's place was only the home."⁶⁹³ The ASLEF Women's Society, despite appearing less overtly political than many branches of the NUR Railway Women's Guild, was still keen to promote the emerging political independence of its female members.

⁶⁹⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 45, 10 (1934) p.529

⁶⁹¹ *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 10 (1925) p.481

⁶⁹² *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 9 (1928) p.448

⁶⁹³ *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 7 (1928) p.362

The encouragement of women to take their place in political society outside the home also led to a greater involvement of Women's Society members in local and national politics. The Women's Society began sending delegates to the Labour Women's Conference from 1928 and in 1934 proposed three resolutions for the Conference on unemployment, disarmament and taxation with particular regard to the strain placed on the unemployed adult children of workers earning over £3, who did not qualify for unemployment benefit for this reason.⁶⁹⁴ However, their political activity was not as prominent as some of the branches of the Railway Women's Guild, and very little of this was written about on 'Our Women's Page'

The education of children as to the meaning of trade unionism and its benefits was also considered a particularly important endeavour for the Women's Society. Children's parties were held every Christmas and female members were encouraged to explain to their children why they were able to attend these parties, due to their father's trade union membership and the security of wages and conditions that this afforded the 'railway family'. It was hoped that in the future, "they will grow up to be Trade Union members" due to this early education.⁶⁹⁵ Again, this was a demonstration of why the idea of the 'railway family' was so important to trade unions in order to prepare potential future members for a life in the workplace and in the trade union.

To celebrate the 10th anniversary of the ASLEF Women's Society in 1934, an article entitled 'The Women's Society of the ASLEF' was included in the *Locomotive Journal*. This eulogised some of the achievements of the Society, in particular their commitment to the trade union, "During this strike the womenfolk of the members

⁶⁹⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 47, 7 (1934) p.396

⁶⁹⁵ *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 12 (1928) p.587

rendered invaluable aid in sustaining the spirit of the men and in ministering to their material and social needs. They formed committees to feed the pickets, the strike committees and long-distance messengers...They rented hundreds of rooms and organised concerts, dances, whist drives and socials. Altogether, they backed their men nobly.”⁶⁹⁶ Wives and female family members did not pressurise the men to return to work and wages, vital for their family’s economic survival, and instead took an active part in encouraging and supporting striking railwaymen. The article also emphasised the trade union idea of the ‘railway family’ – that in a male-dominated union such as ASLEF, where women were prohibited from working in positions that would have allowed their membership of the union, the only female involvement in the trade union was through the Women’s Society. Membership led to a number of benefits for wives and daughters in particular, for example “An unmarried daughter, keeping house for, and dependant on, her father, is entitled to benefits on the same basis as a wife.”⁶⁹⁷ This article effectively demonstrates the key functions of the ASLEF Women’s Society. Primarily designated as a fundraising and social body, it was for these reasons that the Women’s Society was celebrated and supported by ASLEF. The growing political endeavours of certain branches and members of the Women’s Society was considered a by-product of the political education the female members of the Society received as part of their role in supporting the trade union. This was of great benefit to the idea of the ‘railway family’ as defined by ASLEF, as it encouraged male and female members to bond over shared political aims and aspirations yet female auxiliary members never challenged the dominance of male members of the branches.

⁶⁹⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 47, 3 (1934) p.133

⁶⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p.133

5.4 The Railway Queen and the 'railway family'

Whilst not an official auxiliary to a trade union, the Railway Queen was an integral part of the idea of the 'railway family' from 1925 onwards and was one of the most important ways that the idea of the 'railway family' linked all those associated with the railway industry, regardless of railway company or trade union affiliation. The first Railway Queen, Ella Wotton, was crowned at The Centenary Carnival at Belle Vue Gardens in Manchester in 1925 as part of the celebrations commemorating 100 years of railways in Britain. The aim of the centenary celebrations, and the establishment of the Railway Queen, was to unite railway companies, trade unions and railwaymen and their families from across Britain and representatives of the companies, unions and auxiliaries sat on the Carnival Committee.⁶⁹⁸ These relationships had become strained due to the growing size and power of trade unions and the series of strikes that had been called on the railways from the end of the First World War.

The first carnival was attended by fifty thousand men, women and children from across the country and was an example of the sheer numbers that could be mobilised when the 'railway family' was called into action. The popularity of the Carnival ensured that it continued throughout the period, with a new Railway Queen chosen each year to represent the 'railway family' across the country and the world. A few months before the Carnival an advert was placed in the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers asking for applications from the daughters of railwaymen, or from railwaymen nominating their daughters, to be sent to the Railway

⁶⁹⁸ *The Railway Service Journal*, 22, 264 (1925) p.402 and *Locomotive Journal*, 40, 1 (1926) p.5

Employees Committee and later the Railway Queen Trust. An example of an advert from 1933 simply stated “Daughters of railwaymen desiring to enter as candidates for “Railway Queen” must not be under 14 and not over 16 years of age on September 1 of this year, and photographs should be sent to Mr Neilson”.⁶⁹⁹ Mr Neilson was the General Secretary of Railway Employees Committee and was the originator of the idea for a railway employee’s carnival in 1925. The Committee ensured that every year the girl chosen represented a different company and a different grade therefore encouraging applications from all railway workers and ensuring that all members of the ‘railway family’ had the chance to be represented. Although the Railway Queens’ were chosen from photographs, indicating that their appearance was important, they were also chosen for their representative nature, symbolising different railway companies and trade unions each year.

In a lavish ceremony at the Carnival, the Railway Queen was presented with a gown embroidered with artificial diamonds, a tiara and a Chain of Office. She was crowned by delegates from the railway companies and the trade unions in an effort to emphasise the joint nature of the Carnival and the fact that the Railway Queen represented all railway workers and their families. For example, in 1928, the ASLEF General Secretary and the GWR General Manager were the joint Presidents of the Carnival and as such, they both were involved in the ceremony to crown that year’s Railway Queen.⁷⁰⁰ All the expenses of the Railway Queen were met with the help of the Railway Companies and Trade Unions.⁷⁰¹

⁶⁹⁹ LMSM, 10, 8 (1933) p.277

⁷⁰⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 3 (1928) p.121

⁷⁰¹ GWRM, 40, 8 (1928) p.322

The office of Railway Queen was held for a year and during her reign the Railway Queen travelled across the country visiting railway company offices and workshops and trade union meetings in order to boost morale and enhance the 'esprit de corps' amongst railway workers. Sir Josiah Stamp, Chairman of the LMS, gave a speech at the Railwayman's Carnival in 1926 in which he stated that, "if British railways are to get over their difficulties, it was necessary to take a pride in one's railway and to create or re-develop *esprit de corps*."⁷⁰² The office of the Railway Queen was an integral part of this because she represented different companies, different areas of the country and was the daughter of a railwayman from different grades each year, however she also represented railway companies, trade unions and the 'railway family' as a whole. Other industries adopted the idea of an electing a 'Queen' to represent their workers and businesses in general, for example the Cotton Queen Quest ran between 1930 and 1939 to choose a female mill worker to represent the industry whilst the Coal Queen competition was run by the National Coal Board between 1969 and 1983.⁷⁰³ Despite being the first industrial Queen, there are numerous examples of festival Queens and pageant Queens such as the May Queen who were crowned each year in Britain, and it is from these traditions that certain elements of the Railway Queen may have been derived.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰² LMSM, 3, 10 (1926) p.325

⁷⁰³ Conway, Rebecca, 'Making the Mill Girl Modern?: Beauty, Industry and the Popular Newspaper in 1930s' England', *Twentieth Century British History*, 24, 4 (2013) p.518 and Moss, Richard, 'Memories of the Coal Queens takes forgotten world to the National Coal Mining Museum' (2010) <http://www.culture24.org.uk/history-and-heritage/art81654> [01/08/2017]

⁷⁰⁴ Hughes, Isabel, 'Crowning the May Queen – origins of a folk tradition' (2014) <https://blogs.reading.ac.uk/merl/2014/05/01/crowning-the-may-queen-origins-of-a-folk-tradition/> [01/08/2017]

The Railway Queen was used as a vehicle for social control by railway companies, as a story told in the magazine in 1933 demonstrates. On her visit to Denmark the Railway Queen met a number of industrial leaders, one of whom told her that on a visit to England over a decade previously a porter had been rude to him after he asked to be shown where he could get a taxi, with the porter stating, "I have no time for that sort of thing; it is not my job." The gentleman had since refused to visit England again and took his commercial business to Germany. The Editor of the magazine stated that "We publish this story as an indication of the great importance of courtesy when dealing with passengers travelling upon our lines. A great tonnage of goods has been lost both to the railways and the country, through that single discourteous action. If the Railway Queen of Great Britain, Miss Marjorie Goodall, has done no other service than to draw the attention of members of staff to this incident, then she will have helped us considerably in making every one of us realise that courtesy, which costs nothing, may mean so much."⁷⁰⁵ Whilst it is debatable how much attention railwaymen would have paid to this story, it is clear to see that the railway company was using the Railway Queen to uphold the virtues that they desired within their staff and within the 'railway family' in general.

For both railway companies and trade unions, the Railway Queen was an important vehicle for publicity, for example in 1929 she opened the longest platform in Europe at Manchester's Exchange Station for the LMS.⁷⁰⁶ She also represented the railway industry at other industrial events, for example attending the opening of a new

⁷⁰⁵ LMSM, 10, 6 (1933) p.205

⁷⁰⁶ LMSM, 6, 6 (1929) p.204

Cadbury's showroom in 1931.⁷⁰⁷ The Railway Queen was a key supporter of charitable endeavours, particularly those that benefitted the families of railway workers. In 1932, the Railway Queen opened the Junior section of Margate Municipal library and donated books on behalf of the railway companies and trade unions. She visited the local Railway Women's Convalescence Home and local hospitals.⁷⁰⁸ To celebrate the twenty-first anniversary of the Railway Queen, railway orphans were invited to attend a party at which previous Railway Queen's and the current incumbent attended.⁷⁰⁹ Work with orphans, or raising money for the Orphan Fund, was a particularly important role for the Railway Queen, who was often a teenager herself. It was possible that the trade unions in particular were aware of the emotional effect of photographs of the daughter of a railwayman playing with the orphaned child of another railwayman, and were keen to use this in their continued campaign to ensure that all members of the 'railway family' were cared for adequately.⁷¹⁰ Photographs and details of these visits were included in the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers to publicise the good work the Railway Queen was doing throughout her year in office and the ways that she, and by extension, the railway companies and trade unions cared for the 'railway family'. It was a great boon to the Railway Clerks Association when the current Railway Queen became a clerk in 1947 and immediately joined the Union.⁷¹¹ The tenth Railway Queen, Audrey Mossom, achieved a significant amount of publicity for the railway industry during her reign. The daughter of an LNWR Guard from Blackpool,

⁷⁰⁷ GWRM, 43, 6 (1931) p.285

⁷⁰⁸ LMSM, 9, 7 (1932) p.239

⁷⁰⁹ *Locomotive Journal*, 59, 9 (1946) p.223

⁷¹⁰ Another example of this can be seen in the *Locomotive Journal*, 41, 3 (1928) p.121 which contains a photograph of the Railway Queen and information about the Carnival, including the fact that all proceeds from that year would be donated to the Orphan Fund

⁷¹¹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 44, 517 (1947) p.87

Audrey was invited to switch on the Blackpool Illuminations in September 1935 and used her podium to forward the message of peace that the railway companies and trade unions desired, "I hope the Blackpool Illuminations will illuminate the path of peace which the League of Nations is so nobly following on behalf of all young people throughout the world...May they symbolise industrial and international peace."⁷¹²

The Railway Queen was particularly important to the women's trade union auxiliaries, as she was a high-profile female representative of the railway industry. She attended the Annual London reception held by the ASLEF Women's Society each year to celebrate their role in support of the union and was a feature at the social and celebratory events organised by the ASLEF Women's Guild and the RWG.⁷¹³ The fact that the Railway Queen embodied all railway workers was also of particular significance to the trade unions, who felt that they too represented the needs of all railwaymen and their families, "the Railway Queen is, first of all, a symbolic figure representing in her pretty person the whole of railwaydom – president and platelayer, supervisor and signalmen, clerk and cleaner, shunter and shopmen, all have a place in her crown. In honouring her all railwaymen are honoured."⁷¹⁴ Co-operation between trade unions and railway companies was a key policy during the economic difficulties of the late 1920s and 1930s; as a neutral party, the Railway Queen was in a position to enhance this co-operation, as an article in *The Railway Review* from 1930 demonstrates, "As Queen stands above party, and apart from politics, but speaking as

⁷¹² Shenton, Kenneth, 'Audrey Mossom: Railway Queen of Great Britain who was entertained by Stalin on a peace trip to the Soviet Union', *The Independent*, 30/9/2009

<http://www.independent.co.uk/news/obituaries/audrey-mossom-railway-queen-of-great-britain-who-was-entertained-by-stalin-on-a-peace-trip-to-the-1795569.html> [01/08/2017]

⁷¹³ The reception was documented in the magazine each year often with a photograph of the Railway Queen, for example, *Locomotive Journal*, 51, 3 (1938) p.154

⁷¹⁴ *The Railway Review*, 13/6/1930, p.10

the heart of all railwaymen she is an ardent apostle of peace...Here at home she is the symbol of peaceful co-operation. Such co-operation as enabled all sorts of railwaymen to surrender 2 ½ percent of their earnings to help their industry over a difficult period and their employers to restore the agreement when it was asked for.”⁷¹⁵

Another important facet of the role was to foster comradeship between British railway workers and those in other countries including continental Europe, the USA and the USSR. The Railway Queen visited railway establishments in these countries and delivered messages of fraternity from British railway workers and their families. In 1934, the Railway Queen took letters from the RWG and the ASLEF Women’s Guild to American women’s trade union auxiliaries whilst in 1936, the Railway Queen visited the USSR with a message for the wives and daughters of trade union railwaymen in that country from the two trade union auxiliaries. These letters both expressed a desire for closer co-operation in the interests of world peace, international friendship and world disarmament, stating that “The Railway Queen’s message will be the symbol of friendship between our country and yours...”⁷¹⁶ Thus the Railway Queen was helping to extend the ‘railway family’ across international borders.

During her travels abroad, the Railway Queen was presented with a link for her Chain of Office engraved with her name and the country she visited. The links were presented with the desire to signify peace and goodwill between railwaymen across the world and the first of these was presented to Miss Mabel Kitson, the Railway Queen in 1928, who visited France at the wishes of the NUR “to be a messenger to French railwaymen in the interest of international peace.” Each link on the chain was to be

⁷¹⁵ *The Railway Review*, 13/6/1930, p.10

⁷¹⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 47, 5 (1934) p.274 and 49, 4 (1936) p.220

“subscribed by railwaymen all over the world who are interested in the abolition of war.”⁷¹⁷ When the United Nations Association learnt of the symbolic nature of these links they presented the Railway Queen with their own emblem in 1946.⁷¹⁸ The links of the Chain were designed to resemble the couplings between railway carriages and wagons and epitomising the role the Railway Queen was intended to play – to unite railway companies, trade unions, railway workers and their families from across the world. Referring to these aims, Miss Ena Best gave a speech at the Annual Conference of the GWR Social and Educational Union in 1929 where she stated that “Amongst the happiest of my duties is to foster friendship, peace, and the spirit of co-operation in the railway world.”⁷¹⁹ It is clear that the Railway Queen was upholding the aims of the original Railwaymen’s Carnival, in order to bring railwaymen from diverse companies and unions together both nationally and internationally and to represent the ‘railway family’ physically and symbolically.

5.5 Conclusion

Women’s trade union auxiliaries were the most successful way that the railway trade unions deployed the idea of the ‘railway family’. In fact, the women’s trade union auxiliaries that were formed by the wives of NUR and ASLEF members drew many women into the trade union as supporters and defenders against those critical of the trade union or the labour movement in general. By creating a ‘separate sphere’ where

⁷¹⁷ LMSM, 5, 9 (1928) p.311

⁷¹⁸ This sits alongside the emblems of the railway trade unions which were presented in 1965 to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Railway Queen. The central chain is the emblem of British Railways, presented to the Railway Queen in 1957.

⁷¹⁹ GWRM, 41, 6 (1929) p.241

women could feel a part of the trade union movement but have a limited effect politically, the NUR and ASLEF were safeguarding the privileged position of their male members whilst also encouraging non-working women to become part of the trade union sphere and part of the 'railway family'. The introduction of the Railway Queen in 1925 added an extra dimension to the role that women were able to play within the 'railway family', by allowing the daughter of a railwayman to represent the male-dominated industry from her unique 'separate sphere'.

The NUR Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society had very similar priorities. They were concerned with supporting the trade union in strikes and campaigns for fairer wages and better working conditions for their husbands. When higher wages and improved conditions were introduced, this benefitted the women themselves and their families. The women's auxiliaries were also concerned with fundraising for the trade union particularly the Orphan Fund. In a similar way, this offered protection to the female members and their families in case of accident, ill health or death. Finally, the women's auxiliaries acted as a way that women in the railway community could socialise together and support each other. The women were linked through the nature of their husband's jobs, which were often dangerous, low paid and requiring long hours of shift work that took them away from home. This final aspect, often overlooked by the parent unions, was one of the most important for the women themselves and offered them a support structure centred around the 'railway family'. These efforts made the auxiliaries especially valuable to the trade unions – without the labours of their allied female supporters, such social care policies would have been a great deal more difficult to organise.

The NUR Women's Guild was more of an overtly political organisation than the ASLEF Women's Society, supporting the foundation of the Women's Labour League and many different local and national campaigns including infant and maternal welfare, old age pensions and pacifist campaigns in the inter-war period and during the Second World War. However, this does not mean that the ASLEF Women's Society members were not involved in local and national politics, but that these factors were considered to be of secondary importance behind their role of supporters and fundraisers for ASLEF. Neither auxiliary was particularly celebrated by their parent union for their political campaigning – what mattered to the male members was that they could count on their support in the event of a strike or labour unrest and that the women's auxiliaries brought in a steady stream of income for the Orphan and Benevolent Funds. Both the NUR and ASLEF were broadly supportive of their auxiliaries and often their political aims as well but were unwilling to provide large amounts of funding. Occasionally conflict did arise over the independence of the auxiliary and the way it was run and managed by its female members.

The way that the idea of the 'railway family' was utilised by railway trade unions demonstrates the growing belief that loyalty could be subdivided amongst railway company, trade union, grade, family and by the end of this period, to social class.⁷²⁰ By using the idea of the 'railway family', the trade unions were encouraging those who had traditionally been excluded from trade union membership to support the trade union alongside the railway company that employed their family members. This also allowed

⁷²⁰ McKenna, *The Railwayworkers*, p.30

the members of the trade union auxiliaries to forge their own identities as part of the trade union and the women's movement, as wives, mothers and as women.

The Railway Queen was a crucial way that women and children were drawn into the idea of the 'railway family' along with a way in which the co-operation between railway companies, trade unions and railwaymen could be enhanced and further developed. As the daughter of a railwayman, the Railway Queen was a tool to engage young women with the 'railway family' and as a representative of the industry at home and abroad, she was perfectly poised to extend the idea amongst railwaymen and their families. Both the railway companies and the trade unions took ownership of the Railway Queen and used her role in order to garner positive publicity and augment the idea that the companies and the unions were equally committed to ensuring the welfare of the 'railway family'.

Chapter 6. **A CASE STUDY OF GLOUCESTER, 1900 – 1948**

By utilising a case study for this thesis, it is possible to examine how the idea of the 'railway family' was deployed in practice by railway companies and trade unions and how railwaymen and their family members accepted this idea and created their own 'railway family' within the local community. The town of Gloucester provides an excellent example of everyday life for railway workers and their families. Gloucester is located in the South West of England, sixty-five miles South of Birmingham and approximately thirty miles West of the Welsh border. The Victorian period saw a large influx of workers to Gloucester and during the first half of the twentieth century the population continued to rise from 47,955 in 1901 to 67,280 in 1951.⁷²¹ During this period, the building of the Gloucester and Berkeley Canal established Gloucester first as a port and then as a manufacturing town with timber mills, match factories and engineering works. The Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company was founded in 1860 and employed 360 workers. By 1874, the company had secured

⁷²¹ Herbert, N.M (ed.) 'Gloucester, 1835-1985: Economic development to 1914', in *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4, the City of Gloucester*, pp. 170-183. [http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol4/pp. 170 - 183](http://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/glos/vol4/pp.170-183) [29/09/2015] These figures are taken from the 1901 Census data and the 1951 Census data.

overseas contracts and employed around 800 workers.⁷²² Throughout the period the Carriage and Wagon Company remained one of the largest employers in Gloucester.⁷²³

The first railways were built in Gloucester in the 1840s. There were two large railway companies that operated in the town throughout this period, the Midland Railway Company (MR) and the Great Western Railway Company (GWR). They had separate railway termini which were located next to each other and there was a great deal of competition between the two companies. One reason for this was that the Great Western Railway Company failed in their attempt to purchase the Bristol and Gloucester Railway in 1845, which then formed part of the Midland Railway Company route into the city.⁷²⁴ This competition between the two companies also extended to access to Gloucester Docks, an important port for trade and sea traffic to the Bristol Channel.⁷²⁵ The rivalry continued when the Midland Railway Company was amalgamated into the London Midland and Scottish Railway Company (LMS) in 1923.

The city was divided into wards of which Barton and Tredworth, two inner city areas, were the focus of much of the railway development and where many railwaymen and their families lived. Politically throughout the period 1900 to 1948, Gloucester was relatively stable. A Liberal MP, Russell Rea, was elected in 1900; he had the backing of the railway trade unions. From 1910 to 1945 a Conservative MP represented the city

⁷²² Ibid.

⁷²³ Gloucester Railway Carriage and Wagon Company, *A history of the Gloucester Carriage and Wagon Company* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1960) p. 42. The Carriage and Wagon Company was not affiliated to any of the railway companies that ran through Gloucester or the railway trade unions that had branches in the city. According to the company history, there was only one strike by staff of the Carriage and Wagon Company over pay in 1911.

⁷²⁴ Mitchell, Vic and Smith, Keith, *Gloucester to Bristol including the Branches to Nailsworth, Dursley and Thornbury* (Middleton Press, Mithurst, 2004) p. 1

⁷²⁵ Ibid., p. 14

and thereafter there was a swing to the Labour Party in the 1945 election.⁷²⁶ The city council was predominantly Conservative from 1909 and one of the Conservative leaders in the city, James Bruton was elected Mayor nine times between 1908 and 1919. The Labour Party struggled for representation on the city council and did not have its first Mayor until 1932.⁷²⁷ This was significant for many trade union railwaymen, who were staunch Labour Party supporters.

From the 1890s, Gloucester city council provided a wide range of municipal services to residents including a mortuary, public baths, playing field, museum and library although it did rely on voluntary associations to provide some health and welfare facilities, including maternal and infant welfare centres.⁷²⁸ During the first half of the twentieth century Gloucester expanded greatly and the city council worked hard to care for the health and wellbeing of the city's residents but railway companies and trade unions were also able to fill the gap left by a lack of council provisions in certain areas.

Gloucester makes for a valuable case study because it was not a typical 'railway town' of the period, as Swindon, Derby and Crewe were. Much has been written about the history of these towns that were dominated by the railway industry and often provided the sole means of employment. However, in Gloucester there were many other avenues of employment for men and women. This meant that the railway companies in the city had to work harder to attract employees and to prevent them

⁷²⁶ Herbert, 'Gloucester, 1835-1985: Parliamentary representation', in *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4, the City of Gloucester*, (London, 1988), pp. 205-209.

⁷²⁷ Herbert, 'Gloucester, 1835-1985: City government', in *A History of the County of Gloucester: Volume 4, the City of Gloucester*, ed. N M Herbert (London, 1988), pp. 191-205.

⁷²⁸ Ibid.

from leaving for other employment. Thus, the idea of the 'railway family' was crucial for this purpose. The railway trade union branches within Gloucester, the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (ASRS) which became the National Union of Railwaymen (NUR) from 1913 and the Associated Society of Locomotive Steam Engineman and Firemen (ASLEF) and their respective women's auxiliaries relied on the idea of the 'railway family' to attract and keep members.⁷²⁹ The Railway Clerks Association (RCA) also had a branch of their union within the city.

Gloucestershire Archives hold the most complete set of minutebooks for the Railway Women's Guild nationally that run from 1911 to 1966. It is clear from research in the previous chapter that the Guild were integral to the way that the NUR promulgated the idea of the 'railway family' amongst women. It was also an important factor in the creation of a 'railway family' in the local community. Women's trade union auxiliaries have long been an understudied resource, which this chapter will examine in detail in order to understand who their members were, why they joined and how important the auxiliaries were to their members, the trade unions and the 'railway family'. The Railway Women's Guild is a particular feature of this chapter due to the nature of the sources available. They were also innovators in setting up a Widows' Fund for members, being the first branch of the Guild to do so in 1911. The records of the Guild in Gloucester add further credence to the idea of choosing the city as the location of this case study. Combined with the railway company magazines, the trade union newspapers, local newspapers, census data and other local records, it is possible

⁷²⁹ Throughout this chapter, ASRS will be used when discussing the union before 1913 and NUR will be used when referring to the union after 1913. The NUR was formed after amalgamation with two smaller unions, the General Railway Workers Union and the United Pointsmen's and Signalmen's Society in March 1913

to build a picture of how the idea of the 'railway family' worked in practice in Gloucester from 1900 to 1948. Beginning with a wide survey of the railway companies and trade unions in Gloucester, this chapter will provide a greater focus on the lives of the 'railway family' and the creation of an occupational community this encouraged within the city.

6.1 The railway companies in Gloucester

It is clear that the railway companies in Gloucester provided opportunities for social interaction, education and welfare in order to facilitate the idea of the 'railway family' and ensure that the loyalty of railwaymen and their families was bound to the company they worked for. Separately, the two railway companies set up bodies that provided industrial welfare for their staff and non-working family members. Industrial welfare became an important facet of railway company paternalism, encouraging bonds of loyalty to be formed between companies and their employees.⁷³⁰ The Great Western Social and Educational Union was set up in January 1923 as an umbrella body for the diverse range of clubs and societies that were run and sponsored by the GWR. In Gloucester, this led to the building of a Railwaymen's Institute in August 1932, to provide a facility where members of the Union could meet and participate in activities including whist, draughts and skittles.⁷³¹ This Institute was transformed into a staff canteen during the Second World War in order to serve round-the-clock meals to Gloucester GWR employees.⁷³² The library, billiard table and other indoor sports

⁷³⁰ For more on railway company paternalism and industrial welfare, see Chapter 3 – Railway Companies and the 'railway family'

⁷³¹ GWRM, 44, 8 (1932) p. 315

⁷³² GWRM, 55, 8 (1943) p. 120

equipment remained to provide some recreation for railwaymen and women. The Gloucester branch of the GWR Social and Educational Union set up their own railwaymen's parliament, to discuss the workings of the Government. The local MP, Colonel James Horlick presented the Gloucester railwaymen's parliament with a daily copy of the debates that occurred within the Houses of Parliament.⁷³³ This demonstrates the willingness of the MP to engage with railwaymen and solicit their support, as well as the possibility for railway employees to engage with the politics of their local area and nationally. The Gloucester Social and Educational Union branch was described in the GWR Magazine as "progressive" and published its own small magazine about the clubs within the Gloucester branch.⁷³⁴

The Social and Educational Union branch at Gloucester also had a women's section that was open to female members of staff and the wives and daughters of railwaymen. This acted as an auxiliary to the men's branch, organising social and fundraising events. The women's section ran a stall at the Carnival to raise money for the Gloucester Royal Infirmary in September 1930, as did the two women's trade union auxiliaries in Gloucester, the Railway Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society.⁷³⁵ A Scouting troop for the sons of Gloucester railwaymen and the juniors employed in the Company was set up in April 1933 and a retired section for ex-railwaymen was formed in the late 1930s.⁷³⁶ In this way, all members of the 'railway family' were catered for by the GWR Social and Educational Union in Gloucester. The fact that these facilities were provided by the railway company for their staff and non-

⁷³³ GWRM, 37, 2 (1925) p. 80

⁷³⁴ GWRM, 39, 2 (1927) p.77

⁷³⁵ GWRM, 42, 9 (1930) p.404

⁷³⁶ GWRM, 45, 4 (1933) p.184 and 50, 9 (1938) p.389

working family members encouraged the loyalty that the Company desired. Without the Social and Educational Union, many Gloucester railwaymen and their families would not have been able to socialise with each other, enjoy their hobbies or gain a better education without considerably greater personal expense, which many of them may not have been able to afford. This also benefitted the Company, not just in terms of reinforcing a GWR identity in Gloucester and cultivating Company loyalty but also by encouraging greater cohesion amongst staff members and the 'railway family', ensuring they were better educated and more well-rounded members of staff and potential future employees.

The sport and social facilities for the employees of the LMS in Gloucester took time to become established after the original railway company, the Midland Railway Company was amalgamated into the LMS in 1923. George Revill, who has written about the Midland Railway Company in Derby, has argued that the Company was not the most welfare minded and therefore they did not provide many of the social and educational facilities that the GWR and other companies did.⁷³⁷ Another indicator of this is the fact that, unlike many of the other large railway companies that existed before 1923, the Midland Railway Company did not have a company magazine. With the arrival of the LMS in Gloucester, these educational and social welfare initiatives were set up. By December 1925, the LMS sports and social activities in Gloucester included cricket, football, a tug of war team and a horticultural society. According to the report in the Magazine, "coordination among all ranks is proceeding apace."⁷³⁸ Mutual Improvement Classes were set up across the LMS network in 1933 and Gloucester railwaymen

⁷³⁷ Revill, 'Liberalism and paternalism', p.198

⁷³⁸ LMSM, 2, 12 (1925) p.422

benefitted from these, with lectures and educational outings monthly.⁷³⁹ The LMS also showed their in-house educational films in Gloucester over the winter of 1937 and 1938.⁷⁴⁰ In a very similar way to the GWR, the LMS were eventually providing facilities for the education and the enjoyment of their employees and their families. In this way, they were cementing the relationship between LMS employees in Gloucester, the wider 'railway family' and the Company through industrial welfare.

Despite the competition that existed between the two companies, there were a small number of GWR/LMS initiatives that overlapped. The Gloucester GWR Ambulance Corps was founded in 1889, whilst the LMS Combined Ambulance Corps held its first annual competition in January 1926.⁷⁴¹ The Ambulance Corps provided First Aid classes for railwaymen, teaching them valuable first aid and providing a way that the Companies could ensure their workers were more knowledgeable and safe. The classes were considered to be particularly important for railwaymen, giving them the skills to save the lives of colleagues, passengers and members of the public. The GWR termed those members of staff who saved lives because of their first aid training 'Super Citizens' enhancing their reputation within the railway company and within the 'railway family'.⁷⁴² The LMS also encouraged staff to join ambulance classes because, "a knowledge of First Aid grows more and more urgent."⁷⁴³ Nationally these ambulance classes were opened to female workers as their numbers grew, although they remained segregated into male and female classes. Ambulance classes were one area where there

⁷³⁹ LMSM, 10, 5 (1933) p.172

⁷⁴⁰ LMSM, 14, 10 (1937) p.488

⁷⁴¹ LMSM, 3, 1 (1926) p. 24

⁷⁴² GWRM, 37, 1 (1925) p.26

⁷⁴³ LMSM, 14, 4 (1937) p.157

was some overlap between the two companies. First Aid competitions held in the city encouraged GWR and LMS men to compete against each other and against men from other companies in Gloucester.⁷⁴⁴ This competition strengthened the bonds of company loyalty by pitting railwaymen against each other. In December 1934, the LMS and GW Combined Ambulance Corps organised a talk on the history and development of railways in Britain by the local MP, Leslie Boyce, in aid of the local Children's Hospital.⁷⁴⁵ Charitable causes were one of the few areas where GWR and LMS railwaymen worked together in the local community in order to raise money.

Within the respective railway company magazines, local news stories were included in order to generate pride in a railwaymen's colleagues in the city and in the division that Gloucester operated. For example, the GWR ran a train working competition, designed to increase the efficiency of the Company, foster a sense of competition between the different districts and for those areas that did particularly well, increase the pride railwaymen felt in themselves and in their colleagues, who worked with them in the same division. Gloucester won the passenger train working section of this competition in 1939, which was celebrated in the GWR Magazine.⁷⁴⁶ The fact that Bob the Collecting Dog raised £370 for the GWR Widows and Orphans Fund over the eleven years that he worked at Gloucester station was included as a testimony to the generosity of the staff, their families and the travellers that used Gloucester

⁷⁴⁴ GWRM, 32, 3 (1920) p.63

⁷⁴⁵ GWRM, 46, 12 (1934) p.562

⁷⁴⁶ GWRM, 51, 2 (1939) p.70

station.⁷⁴⁷ In a similar vein, the LMS Hospital Fund contributed £500 to the Gloucester Royal Infirmary for 1925.⁷⁴⁸

The LMS Magazine encouraged railwaymen across the network to be proud of their colleague, Mr W.J Stagg, a clerk at Gloucester who wrote a hymn that was performed at Gloucester Cathedral for the Trades Council and Labour Party service at which a large number of local railwaymen attended.⁷⁴⁹ This pride in the Company and in other railwaymen and their families helped to bond the 'railway family' together and encourage a mutual sense of goodwill and co-operation to which all in Gloucester could subscribe. It can also be used as evidence to suggest that the idea of the 'railway family' from the railway company perspective was being understood in Gloucester in the way that they hoped.

However, despite their efforts at industrial welfare, there were a number of complaints in *The Railway Review* and the *Locomotive Journal* about the LMS and the GWR in Gloucester. One letter highlighted the poor condition of GWR locomotives in that area and fears there would be an accident because of this.⁷⁵⁰ There was also a conflict in Gloucester regarding the division of Sunday working, with some railwaymen calling for a fairer distribution of overtime and asking their union to ensure this happened.⁷⁵¹ The trade unions and railway companies were forced to have more interaction with each other over time as the companies officially recognised the unions

⁷⁴⁷ GWRM, 33, 11 (1921) p.272

⁷⁴⁸ LMSM, 3, 5 (1926) p.159

⁷⁴⁹ LMSM, 4, 1 (1927) p.16

⁷⁵⁰ *The Railway Review*, 02/11/1900, p.7

⁷⁵¹ *Locomotive Journal*, 36, 7, (1923) p.303

and began formally negotiating with them over issues that affected railway workers.⁷⁵² However, within the company magazines, trade union newspapers or the minutebooks of the Gloucester branches of the NUR and ASLEF, these negotiations were rarely written about in detail with specific reference to Gloucester.

The two railway companies in Gloucester also interacted with the NUR Railway Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society in their role as trade union auxiliaries. The Guild organised outings for their members, widows and orphans and depending on their destination used either the Great Western Railway Company or Midland/LMS as transport. In 1922, the Midland Railway Company agreed to allow the Guild to hire a saloon for their annual outing for 10 shillings whilst in 1924, the newly formed LMS offered the Guild a saloon for free.⁷⁵³ The issue of Guild outings can offer an insight into the competition that was emerging between road and rail. During the 1920s and 1930s the Guild began to use buses and coaches as transportation for their outings but they soon realised that they needed to use rail transport in order to support the railway companies and by extension their husbands because, "it is only fair that we encourage the Company as we have to look to them for our living."⁷⁵⁴ This demonstrates the loyalty the railway companies were able to cultivate from their utilisation of the 'railway family' – the Guild realised that their husbands employment and by extension their family lives were dependant on the success of the railway company. In turn, the companies offered the Guild transportation at discounted rates in order to attract their business and curry favour.

⁷⁵² For a discussion on the recognition of trade unions, see Chapter 4 – Trade unions and the 'railway family'

⁷⁵³ RWG minutebook, 11/07/1922, D3128/6/3 and 03/07/1924, D3128/6/4

⁷⁵⁴ RWG minutebook, 13/04/1933, D3128/6/6

The railway companies also encouraged their societies and social clubs to interact with the Railway Women's Guild, for example the GWR Ambulance Corps put on a display at a Guild social evening in 1911.⁷⁵⁵ The LMS Ambulance Corps wrote to the Guild to ask for their assistance in fundraising for the Gloucester Royal Infirmary and the GWR even attempted to encourage railwaymen's wives to take part in a May Day Church Parade by appealing to them through the Guild.⁷⁵⁶

The relationship between the Railway Women's Guild and the railway companies in Gloucester was not always harmonious however, as the Guild complained vociferously in October 1914 when a member visited the wife of a railwayman who had volunteered to join up and "she had not received any money from the GWR for 2 weeks."⁷⁵⁷ Railway companies continued to pay a portion of the wages of their staff members in the Forces during the war; for this wife to fail to receive any payments from the GWR would have left her and her family in a very difficult financial position. There were also a number of complaints to the LMS when the company stopped granting privilege tickets to the children of railway widows.⁷⁵⁸ These complaints expose some of the limitations of the railway company utilisation of the idea of the 'railway family' and their interactions with the Railway Women's Guild. The Guild in Gloucester were willing to support and patronise the railway companies because they knew that their husband's jobs were dependant on the success of the Midland/LMS and the GWR. However, they were also aware, through their involvement with the trade

⁷⁵⁵ *The Railway Review*, 08/12/1911, p.7

⁷⁵⁶ RWG minutebook, 17/04/1930, D3128/6/5 and 03/05/1928, D3128/6/5

⁷⁵⁷ RWG minutebook, 24/10/1914, D3128/6/2

⁷⁵⁸ RWG minutebook, 21/05/1925, D3128/6/4

unions, that railway company employees and their families could expect certain concessions and benefits from the companies and resented their withdrawal.

It is clear that industrial welfare played a key role in how the idea of the 'railway family' was deployed within Gloucester by the two railway companies that operated in the city. By providing these facilities, the railway companies were attempting to ensure that they were viewed favourably by their employees and their non-working family members in order that they remained healthy, intellectually stimulated and above all, loyal to the company. The evidence from Gloucester suggests that the railway companies were largely successful in their aims to create a loyal workforce who realised that their welfare was bound up with the success of the company. Members of the 'railway family' in Gloucester were however, able to ensure that their interests were also protected by becoming members of the trade union and their auxiliaries.

6.2 The Trade Unions in Gloucester

The three railway trade unions, the NUR, ASLEF and the RCA all had branches in Gloucester and cultivated the 'railway family' according to the specific needs and wishes of their union. The NUR and ASLEF had a continuous presence in the city whilst the RCA branch in Gloucester was strongest during the first half of the period, disappearing from the RCA newspaper almost entirely from the early 1920s onwards.

6.2.1 The ASRS/NUR in Gloucester

The Gloucester branch of the ASRS was founded in 1881 and by 1915 there were two NUR branches in the city, referred to as Gloucester No. 1 and Gloucester No. 2. The branch reports from Gloucester that feature in *The Railway Review* can help us to

understand the priorities of the Gloucester NUR branches and how they treated their members. This can indicate how they understood and experienced the 'railway family', particularly in terms of the language they used and the support structures that were put in place for members and their families.

Gloucester NUR branch members supported each other in times of need, indicating the 'family' feeling that existed between them. They attended members' weddings and funerals and these were often recorded in *The Railway Review*. The funeral of Brother F.R. Hiram, who died aged 37 in February 1902 was attended by "40 of his fellow workers in uniform; the chairman, vice-chairman and branch secretary were also present."⁷⁵⁹ Members whose wives or children had died were treated with a great deal of sympathy, for example, the arrears of a Brother who had lost his wife recently were cleared at a meeting in April 1900.⁷⁶⁰ The branch also made collections for local widows whose husbands had been members of the ASRS/NUR.⁷⁶¹ There were regular appeals to members to raise money for Brothers who were ill or injured, for example a collection was taken in 1900-1 for one member who had been absent from work for ten months due to a debilitating illness.⁷⁶² Another collection raised 11s and 9d for a member who had suffered severe burns in an accident.⁷⁶³ Competitions helped raise money for members in need, whilst also providing an incentive to donate. In June 1902, a watch guessing competition was arranged to raise money for Brothers T. Meek

⁷⁵⁹ *The Railway Review*, 07/02/1902, p.13

⁷⁶⁰ *The Railway Review*, 27/04/1900, p.3

⁷⁶¹ *The Railway Review*, 18/05/1900, p.2

⁷⁶² *The Railway Review*, 30/11/1900, p.2

⁷⁶³ *The Railway Review*, 04/01/1901, p.3

and C. Oakley.⁷⁶⁴ The Benevolent Fund was administered locally and these funds were used to ease the suffering of those who were sick or unemployed. In March 1906, there were four members of the Gloucester branch on the unemployment list.⁷⁶⁵ Retirement presentations, unlike those that featured in railway company magazines, often did not include wives or families and all the gifts and money were presented to the member.⁷⁶⁶

The Gloucester ASRS branch was keen to see a federation between the ASRS and ASLEF, as a meeting that was held in May 1900 demonstrates. They invited their ASLEF counterparts to this meeting but only one ASLEF member who was also a member of the ASRS attended.⁷⁶⁷ The lack of interest by ASLEF members is noteworthy because it shows that the Gloucester ASRS branch cared more deeply about greater co-operation between the ASRS and ASLEF than the Gloucester ASLEF branch did. This is reflected throughout the period and references to this can be found in *The Railway Review*, the *Locomotive Journal* and the ASLEF minutebook. The ASRS, and later the NUR, believed that the best way to achieve better working and living conditions for their members was as an all-grades federation whilst ASLEF felt that they alone could ensure that drivers and firemen got the surest support.

The Gloucester ASRS branch passed a resolution to support the “Great Eastern men” in their attempts to improve their working conditions and sent 10 shillings to dismissed London and North Western Railway Company employees.⁷⁶⁸ The resolution demonstrates the fraternal support that members of the ASRS showed to one another

⁷⁶⁴ *The Railway Review*, 06/06/1902, p.5. This was a competition where prizes were won for guessing the time a watch was stopped.

⁷⁶⁵ *The Railway Review*, 16/03/1906, p.3

⁷⁶⁶ *The Railway Review*, 04/01/1901, p.11

⁷⁶⁷ *The Railway Review*, 11/05/1900, p.3

⁷⁶⁸ *The Railway Review*, 10/08/1900, p.2 and 20/09/1901, p.2

as part of the 'railway family' and was a successful way that the trade union deployed the idea. It also indicates that the ASRS was fragmented across company and regional divisions; the idea of the 'railway family' was one that had the ability to unite members regardless of company, grade or locality. Not only did the Gloucester branch support the efforts of other railwaymen for better working conditions, they also supported striking workers in other industries, for example in September 1900, the branch sent 10 shillings to striking hosiery workers.⁷⁶⁹ This applied internationally as well – in 1901 the Gloucester ASRS branch sent 10 shillings to striking Paris and Calais lace workers, demonstrating the connections made through trade unionism and socialism and reflecting the international nature of railway trade unions. This grew stronger during the first half of the twentieth century with increased militancy and international federations.⁷⁷⁰

The Gloucester NUR branch interacted with the wives and children of members. Wives and daughters were involved with social efforts and refreshment duties even before the formation of the Railway Women's Guild branch in 1902. At the Annual Tea in 1900, some of the women who later became influential in the Guild branch were in charge of the refreshments and took part in the evening's entertainment, indicating that women were keen to be involved in the union, even before any separate avenues of participation were opened up to them.⁷⁷¹ These women became some of the core members of the Gloucester Guild. Their long-service records were celebrated in March 1926 with a special presentation ceremony where the National President gave eight

⁷⁶⁹ *The Railway Review*, 07/09/1900, p.2

⁷⁷⁰ *The Railway Review*, 01/02/1901, p.3 and 01/03/1901, p.3

⁷⁷¹ *The Railway Review*, 27/04/1900, p.5

members (Mrs Beer, Mrs Belgin, Mrs Rowles, Mrs Bishop, Mrs Oakley, Mrs Halford and Mrs Roberts) silver badges in recognition of over twenty years of individual service in the Guild. The Executive Committee member present at the ceremony stated that “the greatest honour was due to the members who remained loyal to the Guild since its formation.”⁷⁷²

The visit of the Railway Queen to Gloucester in July 1944 was another instance where the NUR, ASLEF, the LMS and the GWR, interacted with the extended ‘railway family’. The Railway Queen visited the town on the 8th July 1944 to open the Gloucester Holidays at Home programme. This was a six-week programme designed to encourage members of the public not to use the railways during their summer holidays due to the war time stresses placed on the industry. Within her retinue, the Railway Queen had six maids of honour, three of whom were the daughters of NUR members and three who were the daughters of ASLEF members. “The reception committee was fully representative of management, unions and the Women’s Guilds.”⁷⁷³ Officials from the two railway companies and the three railway trade unions in the city addressed members of the public in Gloucester through messages read out by the Railway Queen.⁷⁷⁴ In this way, all those connected to the Railway Queen, and the ‘railway family’ had input into this event in Gloucester designed to ease the traffic on the railways during war time and ensure the smooth working of the industry in a time of upheaval.

The Gloucester branch of the NUR was instrumental in the formation of the Guild in October 1902 as “The sanction of the branch was given for the secretary to call

⁷⁷² RWG minutebook, 25/3/1926, D3128/6/4

⁷⁷³ *The Railway Review*, 21/7/1944, p.6

⁷⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, p.6

the ladies together with the object of forming a Women's Guild, and it is hoped it will get well supported."⁷⁷⁵ The first meeting of the Gloucester Guild was a tea and concert held at the Labour Hall to which all railwaymen and their wives were invited. Twenty-seven women subscribed to the Guild at this first meeting.⁷⁷⁶ The Gloucester branch then invited the Guild to co-operate with them on a number of different social and fundraising efforts, particularly the Annual Tea and the Orphan Fund.⁷⁷⁷ There will be more discussion on the Railway Women's Guild in Section 6.3. Not all women who were members of the Guild had husbands in the ASRS, but the majority did. One reason that this was permitted was that the Guild strongly believed that these women could influence their husbands to become members of the trade union. This was an area of controversy between ASRS branches and Guild branches in other areas but it does not seem to have become an issue in Gloucester. A more detailed discussion of these debates can be found in Chapter 5. The only case of this emerging as a cause of disagreement was in May 1932, when the Gloucester No.2 branch report stated that "we have discovered that the husband of one of the officials of the Railway Women's Guild was a "non" of some years standing."⁷⁷⁸ The Guild replied directly to the branch with a letter stating "to the best of our knowledge and belief we have no member of the Guild whose husband is not in the NUR."⁷⁷⁹ The matter does not appear to have been raised by either side again.

⁷⁷⁵ *The Railway Review*, 03/10/1902, p.3

⁷⁷⁶ *The Railway Review*, 14/11/1902, p.11

⁷⁷⁷ *The Railway Review*, 11/03/1904, p.12

⁷⁷⁸ *The Railway Review*, 13/5/1932, p.13

⁷⁷⁹ RWG minutebook, 31/3/1932, D3128/6/5

6.2.2 ASLEF and Gloucester

The records for the ASLEF branch in Gloucester are rather limited but they do indicate that the union had a number of subscribers in the city. According to the *Locomotive Journal*, the ASLEF branch in Gloucester met at The Windmill Inn on Hillbrook Street and then later the Labour Club and Institute on the second Sunday of every month. The ASLEF branch was keen to ensure that all of the locomotivemen in Gloucester were members of the union so held large meetings for all those employed by the GWR and Midland/LMS. However the records of these meetings, particularly in the early 1900s, indicate that ASLEF still had a great deal of work to do as only 74 of the 400 men who attended in February 1904 were actually members of the union.⁷⁸⁰ The lack of unionisation brought criticism on the locomotivemen of Gloucester from the pages of the *Locomotive Journal*.⁷⁸¹ By 1909, the branch had grown to 130 members and in 1921, the Organising Secretary for the South-West stated that “I can recollect the time when Gloucester was regarded as one of the difficult places to organise, but this can no longer be said”.⁷⁸² In 1940, the ASLEF branches in Gloucester were further divided along sectional lines with the formation of Gloucester No. 2 (LMS) branch.⁷⁸³ For ASLEF, this sectional nature was one of the difficulties of utilising the idea of the ‘railway family’, as they were divided along grade and company lines.

However, the Gloucester branch of ASLEF were keen to support other members of the ‘railway family’, and especially those in trade unions. They sent 13 shillings towards helping North Eastern railwaymen pay off a fine levied on them for striking. A

⁷⁸⁰ *Locomotive Journal*, 17, 4 (1904) p.174

⁷⁸¹ *Locomotive Journal*, 19, 3 (1906) p.126

⁷⁸² *Locomotive Journal*, 23, 5 (1909) p.248 and 34, 11 (1921) p.414

⁷⁸³ *Locomotive Journal*, 53, 1 (1940) p.51

report in the *Locomotive Journal* indicated that these donations sent in from ASLEF branches across the country “shows the true spirit of trade unionism in helping one another in time of need”.⁷⁸⁴ This was a crucial way that trade union railwaymen were able to demonstrate the ‘imagined community’ of the ‘railway family’ to each other, by providing financial, moral and political support.

Although women do not appear very frequently in the activities of the ASLEF branch in Gloucester, the support of wives was not underestimated by ASLEF members who presented the wife of a retiring union official with a gift in order that “her devotion and self-sacrifice were understood and appreciated”.⁷⁸⁵ This was one way that the involvement of women in the idea of the ‘railway family’ was sanctioned by ASLEF before 1924 and the foundation of their Women’s Society that will be discussed in Section 6.4.

6.2.3 The RCA and Gloucester

The RCA branch in Gloucester was formed in 1904 and was particularly active from the early 1900s to the early 1920s. Clerks from both companies attended branch meetings and this was praised by the District Organising Secretary.⁷⁸⁶ In 1910, fifty clerks were members of the RCA in Gloucester and later that year it was mooted as a model branch in *The Railway Clerk*.⁷⁸⁷ This was demonstrated by the fact that only two months later, the branch had 110 members.⁷⁸⁸ By 1925, in one of the last branch

⁷⁸⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 26, 4 (1913) p.148

⁷⁸⁵ *Locomotive Journal*, 32, 2 (1919) p.44

⁷⁸⁶ *The Railway Clerk*, 5, 54 (1908) p.111

⁷⁸⁷ *The Railway Clerk*, 7, 77 (1910) p.99 and 7/83 (1910) p.213

⁷⁸⁸ *The Railway Clerk*, 8, 85 (1911) p.18

reports that appeared in *The Railway Service Journal*, the RCA branch at Gloucester had 150 members.⁷⁸⁹

The welfare commitments of the Midland Railway Company, which Revill intimates were far behind other railway companies, can be seen in their commitment to allow clerks with consumption six months off work with full pay.⁷⁹⁰ As discussed in Chapter 4, the RCA was the union that voiced most opposition to railway families, the nepotism and welfare schemes of railway companies. They were not afraid to voice complaints against their employers at branch meetings or within their newspaper. The Gloucester branch complained vociferously about the insanitary facilities at the LMS Dock offices which were an issue for clerks across the country who faced working in dark, damp offices that were often the catalyst for poor health.⁷⁹¹

Gloucester clerks did not have the best record at supporting other members of the trade union 'family' however, as they acted as blacklegs in a strike by Midland Railway Company Goods Shed workers in 1913.⁷⁹² There was a great deal of criticism of clerks acting as blacklegs within *The Railway Clerk* as the union tried to establish themselves as part of the trade union idea of the 'railway family'.⁷⁹³ Having members act as strike-breakers would not, in any way, allow the RCA to be accepted by either of the more militant railway trade unions.

The first female members were enrolled in the Gloucester RCA branch in 1916 as part of the RCA's scheme to mitigate the threat of female clerks to their male

⁷⁸⁹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 22, 256 (1925) p.124

⁷⁹⁰ *The Railway Clerk*, 8, 87 (1911) p.58

⁷⁹¹ *The Railway Service Journal*, 20, 233 (1923) p.155

⁷⁹² *The Railway Clerk*, 10, 118 (1913) p.239

⁷⁹³ *The Railway Clerk*, 10, 110 (1913) p.40

members. There is no indication of the degree to which these female clerks were accepted and integrated into the RCA 'railway family', however the fact that fifteen female members joined within a short period of time demonstrates that the Gloucester branch were successful in recruiting female clerks.⁷⁹⁴

From 1925, there were few references made to the Gloucester branch of the RCA. This does not mean that the branch folded (and the fact it had 150 members in 1925 makes this unlikely), rather that the secretary did not feel that sending branch reports to *The Railway Service Journal* was a necessity. However, this does make it challenging to uncover any evidence of the 'railway family' in theory or practice from the RCA perspective in Gloucester after this date.

6.3 The Railway Women's Guild and Gloucester

The Gloucester branch of the Railway Women's Guild was formed in October 1902. The Railway Women's Guild was the women's trade union auxiliary of the Amalgamated Society of Railway Servants (National Union of Railwaymen, NUR, from 1913) for the wives and daughters of unionised railwaymen. It was founded nationally in 1900, with some of the earliest branches being in Accrington, Stockport, Birmingham and Swansea.⁷⁹⁵ The Guild exemplified the way that the trade union deployed the idea of the 'railway family'; by inviting the wives and daughters of unionised railwaymen to assist the trade union and encouraging co-operation between the two groups, the union was actively attempting to bind those women to the union and the wider labour movement from their own 'separate sphere'. In order to do this, they needed to secure

⁷⁹⁴ *The Railway Clerk*, 13, 155 (1916) p.280

⁷⁹⁵ Railway Women's Guild minutebook, Central Organisation Fund minutes, 1901-1910. Uncatalogued

the support and loyalty of these women, which they were able to do through the Railway Women's Guild. The 'railway family' is also in evidence in the way that Guild members were able to support each other and the railway community more generally.

The Railway Women's Guild was primarily intended to assist the ASRS and to provide a support structure for the wives of unionised railwaymen. This included encouraging them to meet and socialise and to educate themselves in trade union and wider political matters.⁷⁹⁶ The Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester is an excellent example of the way that some Guild branches joined campaigning movements outside their trade union responsibilities, especially on issues that affected women and children in the local community.

We are able to understand the workings of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester because the minutebooks of the Guild from 1911 to 1966 survive in Gloucestershire Archives. These minutebooks reveal many details about the Gloucester Guild branch including the campaigns that the Guild supported both locally and nationally and the decision-making process behind these campaigns. When combined with local newspaper reports, the 1911 Census and 'Our Women's Corner', the Guild column in *The Railway Review*, it is possible to build a more complete picture of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester. This can then help us to understand how the trade union idea of the 'railway family' was put into practice from the perspective of its female, non-working members.

⁷⁹⁶ Railway Women's Guild (RWG) minutebook, 1901 – 1910, Central Organisation Fund Minutes of Proceedings, 1901. Uncatalogued

6.3.1 The structure and membership of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester

The Gloucester branch of the Railway Women's Guild met in members' sitting rooms, in the Methodist Sunday School rooms and later the Labour Club and Institute that the Gloucester Guild supported with money, time and membership of the committee. Membership fluctuated over the period; 27 members initially joined the Guild on its foundation in 1902. This had increased to 30 in 1906 and to 64 members by 1911. It wavered during the First World War and inter-war period, between 46 in 1912, 53 in 1919 and 84 in 1925.⁷⁹⁷ In 1901 there were 1,200 railwaymen employed in Gloucester; not all of these railwaymen would have been in a trade union, but the number of women in the Railway Women's Guild is small when considering how many railwaymen were employed in Gloucester. Compared to other Guild branches, such as the Cheltenham branch that had 109 members in 1920, membership of the Gloucester Guild was relatively low, although it is clear from the minutebooks that they did a great deal of campaigning and work in the local community despite their small size.⁷⁹⁸

It is important to consider the structure of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester because this can lead us to an understanding of who the members were, why they supported the campaigns they did and whether the trade union idea of the 'railway family' was effective. The 1911 Census can offer a snapshot of Guild membership in Gloucester during the year and staff records can further illuminate details on other prominent members of the Guild. The chief officers of the Guild were

⁷⁹⁷ *The Railway Review*, 14/11/1902, p.11, 14/12/1906, p.10 and RWG minutebook, 30/11/1911, D3128/6/1, 18/12/1919, D3128/6/3 and 12/02/1925, D3128/6/4 and *The Gloucester Journal*, 21/09/1912, p.5

⁷⁹⁸ RWG minutebook, 12/02/1920, D3128/6/3

the President, the Secretary and the Treasurer. In 1911, the President was Mrs Eva Roberts, the wife of a Midland Railway Goods Guard; the Secretary was Mrs Diana Tyndall, whose husband was also a Goods Guard on the Midland Railway; and the Treasurer was Mrs Eleanor Beer, whose husband was again a Goods Guard for the Midland Railway.⁷⁹⁹ The men were all in the ASRS in Gloucester. In 1911, women whose husbands worked for the Midland Railway Company as Goods Guards dominated the highest positions in the Guild. This was not necessarily the case throughout the life of the Guild as member's husbands worked for both the Midland/LMS and the GWR. Goods Guards on the Midland Railway earned approximately 27 shillings a week; although these were not amongst the highest paid positions within the railway industry, they were certainly further up the hierarchy than many other railway employees and members of the ASRS.⁸⁰⁰ One of the most high-profile members of the Gloucester Guild branch was Mrs Ada Prosser who became the first female magistrate in Gloucester in 1920. Her husband was a blacksmith who worked for a railway company and was prominent in the trade union and labour movement in Gloucester.⁸⁰¹ Sister Prosser was elected President of the Women's Co-operative Guild in Gloucester in 1922, fostering the link between the Railway Women's Guild and the Women's Co-operative Guild in the city which was particularly important in the campaigns surrounding maternal and infant mortality which will be discussed later in this section.

⁷⁹⁹ 1911 Census for England and Wales, Registration District 325, ED 23, Household Schedule (HS) 102, Piece 15317 and ED12, HS290, Piece 15306 and ED12, HS147, Piece 15306. The National archives and www.ancestry.com [12/01/2016]

⁸⁰⁰ ASRS, *Report on Census of Wages, Hours and Labour of men employed on the Railways of the United Kingdom* (London, 1908) pp. 10 - 11

⁸⁰¹ *Gloucester Journal*, 12/10/1935, p.23

The membership of the Guild in Gloucester was not homogenous in terms of employment or wages. None of the members of the Gloucester Guild who joined between 1911 and 1921 were recorded as working in the 1911 Census of England and Wales. It is more of a challenge to uncover whether Guild members worked after this period, although they do make reference to themselves as “workers” during the First World War.⁸⁰² Many trade unionists and their wives subscribed to the ‘male breadwinner’ ideology, which encapsulated the view that men needed to earn a sufficient wage to support their families. This in turn meant that married women did not need to work and thus could support their husband and children at home.⁸⁰³ The fact that no Guild members were working women confirms that railwaymen in Gloucester conformed to this model and suggests that they subscribed to this ideology. The jobs of Guild member’s husbands were varied and included shunters, platelayers, carters, porters, guards, fireman and drivers. These occupations were across the spectrum of railway employment with drivers being the most highly paid and platelayers and porters being amongst the lowest.⁸⁰⁴ Membership of the Guild was not confined to those whose husbands were of higher grades or earned more wages. Just as the National Union of Railwaymen encouraged all railwaymen to join the union regardless of occupation, the Guild was open to all wives and daughters of railwaymen.

Daughters were permitted to join the Railway Women’s Guild at the age of sixteen and there is evidence of mothers and daughters (or daughters-in-law) joining the Railway Women’s Guild together. In the minutebooks they were referred to as

⁸⁰² RWG minutebook, 16/12/1914, D3128/6/2

⁸⁰³ Bruley, Sue, *Women in Britain since 1900* (MacMillan, Basingstoke, 1999) p. 83

⁸⁰⁴ ASRS, *Report on Census of Wages*, pp. 10 - 11

‘senior’ and ‘junior’, for example, Mrs Lucy Oakley ‘Junior’ was elected President of the Gloucester branch in January 1913.⁸⁰⁵ However, having young children presented a challenge to women who wished to become members of the Guild. The census data demonstrates that those who joined had children who were of school age and therefore able to look after themselves or had an older child or boarder who could take care of the younger children whilst the women were at meetings.⁸⁰⁶ The Gloucester RWG alternated afternoon and evening meetings twice a month, thus allowing those who could not attend afternoon meetings to attend in the evening when their husbands were at home and able to take over childcare.

Childcare continued to be a problem for some women who wanted to become members of the Guild, such as the woman who was invited to a meeting but refused to join the Guild on a permanent basis until her children were older.⁸⁰⁷ Another example is that of Mrs Lucy Moulder who joined the Guild in 1911.⁸⁰⁸ She had five children aged between eight and a few months old and is recorded as re-joining in 1919. At this point her youngest child would have been eight years old and the eldest daughter aged twelve, an age that would have been deemed appropriate to take care of younger brothers and sisters. The Guild in Gloucester did not discuss these childcare issues at their meetings but they were acutely aware of it, for example reading important pamphlets and letters at successive afternoon and evening meetings in order that no

⁸⁰⁵ RWG minutebook, 09/01/1913, D3128/6/1

⁸⁰⁶ Ross, Ellen, *Love and Toil: Motherhood in Outcast London, 1870 – 1914* (Oxford University Press, New York, 1993) p. 25. Ross argues that compulsory schooling and raising the school leaving age in successive Education Acts increased a mother’s burden, as she was unable to use older children to care of their brothers and sisters or run errands.

⁸⁰⁷ RWG minutebook, 13/7/1911, Gloucestershire Archives D3128/6/1

⁸⁰⁸ *1911 Census of England and Wales, Gloucester*, Registration District: 325, ED20 HS155, Piece 15314 The National Archives and www.findmypast.com [23/09/15]

member should miss out. There was also a belief that attendance was poor during the First World War as the Guild held their meetings on afternoons only for a number of months during 1916 and 1917 so the decision was taken to revert back to alternative afternoon and evening meetings.⁸⁰⁹ This demonstrates that the Guild were aware of the needs of their members and tailored their meetings to suit as many members of the 'railway family' as possible.

In his social study of York in 1901, Rowntree claims that 21 shillings and 8 pence was the minimum wage a family of four could exist on and any wage under 26 shillings a week would lead to a family with two or more children living in poverty and being underfed.⁸¹⁰ If we relate this claim to Gloucester, there were a number of members of the Guild whose families were living in poverty due to the wages of the male breadwinner according to the 1911 Census. The Great Western Railway Company and the Midland Railway Company paid a large number of their employees under 26 shillings a week.⁸¹¹ One reason for this was the promotion structure of the railway industry – most employees had the potential to be promoted, for example from cleaner to fireman to engine driver and thus had the potential to earn much higher wages. However, this did not alleviate the situation for the railwayman's family who, in the short term, had to survive on a small income.

There were a number of ways that railway families supplemented this. One of these was to rent out a room to a lodger who paid for food and board and helped to

⁸⁰⁹ RWG minutebook, 06/03/1917, D3128/6/3

⁸¹⁰ Rowntree, B. Seebohm, *Poverty. A study of town life* (The Policy Press, Bristol, 2000) First published by Macmillan and Co, London, 1901, p. 259 and p. 296

⁸¹¹ ASRS *Report on Census of Wages*, pp. 10 - 11

increase the family income without the wife having to leave the house to work.⁸¹² Some of these lodgers were family members but others were drawn from the local community; some had a connection through the 'railway family'. For example, Mrs Lillie Pargeter lived in six rooms with her husband, a shunter on the Midland Railway, two children and her husband's three brothers, none of whom worked in the railway industry.⁸¹³ Mrs Selina Miles, who lived with her husband, a boiler washer, and three of her five children in six rooms also had a lodger, an engine driver.⁸¹⁴ Lodging provides further evidence of the 'railway family' in practice as railwaymen provided housing for their workmates in need and this strengthened the bond between railwaymen, their colleagues and family members when no kinship bond existed.

The 1911 Census was the first Census to include more details about individuals within a household and their living situation, for example the number of years a couple had been married, the total number of children they had had (irrespective of whether these children were still alive) and the size of the house in which the household lived. It is possible to find out where Guild members lived, who lived with them and how many rooms the household occupied. It is more challenging to uncover information on the type of housing they lived in and whether the railway company provided their houses. The rate books of Gloucester show that the railway companies owned a large amount of property in the city, but very little of it was housing.⁸¹⁵ Many of the houses

⁸¹² Davidoff, Leonore, *Worlds Between: Historical Perspectives on Gender and Class* (Polity Press, Cambridge, 1995) p. 151

⁸¹³ *1911 England and Wales Census*, Registration District 325, ED20, HS114, Piece 15314

⁸¹⁴ *1911 England and Wales Census*, Registration District 325, ED12, HS291, Piece 15306

⁸¹⁵ The rate books of the wards of Barton, Lower Barton, Allington, West, Kingsholm, East, South, Southend, Tredworth and Tuffley, the wards most central within the city of Gloucester and where the Guild minutebooks showed railwaymen lived, were surveyed with a selection chosen from between 1900 and 1928, Gloucestershire Archives, GBR/L22/11/3-51

railwaymen lived in were rows of terraced houses. In Alfred Street, an area where a large number of Guild members lived, these houses had between five and six rooms. The number of occupants ranged between three and nine. Mrs Adelaide Humphreys, wife of a GWR engine driver, lived in Alfred Street with her husband and her father, a retired GWR train examiner. Their three children no longer lived at home.⁸¹⁶ Mrs Charlotte Dowell also lived in Alfred Street with her husband, a Midland Railway Fireman and their seven children aged between fifteen and one.⁸¹⁷ The Medical Officer of Health Reports for Gloucester note that most houses were connected to the city water supply and in 1913 only twenty-five houses across the city were let to more than one family. According to these reports, the average rent for four rooms was between 3s and 6d and 4s and 6d; for five rooms it was between 4s and 6d and 5s and 9d; and for six rooms it was between 5s and 3d and 6s and 6d a week.⁸¹⁸ If we take the example of Mrs Dowell, as a fireman her husband would earn approximately 23s and 9d a week which would leave roughly 18 shillings after rent for food, coal and other essentials including membership of the Guild. Membership dues were raised from 3d to 4d a month in January 1914.⁸¹⁹

18 shillings a week was not a large amount to house, feed and clothe a family of nine. Maud Pember Reeves, in her study of forty-two families in Lambeth, London, found that the wife and three children of a railway carriage washer who earned between 18 and 21 shillings a week existed on 2d of food per day in order that her

⁸¹⁶ *1911 England and Wales Census*, Registration District 325, ED15, HS142, Piece 15309

⁸¹⁷ *1911 England and Wales Census*, Registration District 325, ED15, HS127, Piece 15309

⁸¹⁸ Medical Officer of Health Reports, 1913, pp. 32 – 33. GBR/N2/11/3

⁸¹⁹ *ASRS Report on Census of Wages*, pp. 10 – 11 and *The Railway Review*, 16/01/1914, Modern Records Centre, Warwick, MSS.127/NU/4/1/2

husband could be better fed.⁸²⁰ In 1914, a loaf of bread and a pint of milk cost approximately 1d each.⁸²¹ Many working class wives managed their households within these meagre budgets and according to Pember Reeves, they had to endure not only a lack of good quality food but also poor housing, lack of space and warmth.⁸²² Cooking with such a small budget meant that husbands and children were provided with one hot meal a day and two bread-based smaller meals.⁸²³ Mothers often went without even this and it was routinely the case that those who enjoyed the stability of employment in the railway industry could be plunged into this level of poverty through illness, death or employment fluctuations including strikes.⁸²⁴ The precarious living conditions of members of the Guild may have contributed to the campaigns they chose to support between 1902 and 1948.

6.3.2 The creation of an occupational community in Gloucester

The majority of members of the Railway Women's Guild lived in one particular area of Gloucester, close to both the Midland and Great Western stations. The meeting places of the Guild in Gloucester were also within this locality. In this way, the 'railway family' extended out of the workplace and into the city, creating an occupational community in one particular area of Gloucester that had the potential to provide support outside a kinship or family network, as part of the 'railway family'. This

⁸²⁰ Pember Reeves, Maud, *Round About A Pound A Week* (Persephone, London, 2008) First published in 1913, pp. 122 - 123

⁸²¹ BBC Learning, *Turn Back Time*, (BBC Learning, London, 2010) p.9. Prices taken from a resource pack designed for primary schools

⁸²² Pember Reeves, *Round About A Pound A Week*, p. 134

⁸²³ Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 48

⁸²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 12

occupational community could make a significant difference to street life, and Ellen Ross describes one community in Battersea, London that was populated mainly with railway workers. On Sunday mornings, women were absent from the streets and parks as they prepared a Sunday Roast for their families on what was often their husbands' only day off.⁸²⁵

Certain streets within the neighbourhoods had a large proportion of Guild members indicating that as well as clustering in one area, the most active members of the trade union and the 'railway family' also encouraged their neighbours to join the union and the RWG. Thus, the idea of the 'railway family' was successful in recruiting new members to the Guild and to the trade union through the creation of a tight-knit occupational community who were concerned with the welfare of those within the 'railway family'. The wives of railwaymen, and those whose husbands were members of the trade union, had the common cause of the trade union movement to unite them and this demonstrates that the 'railway family' was not necessarily a bond through blood, as the idea has been traditionally conceived, but through the railway industry itself. In turn, this cements the idea of the railway industry as an important 'imagined community'. The railway community in Gloucester is shown on the maps on the following pages which chart a large proportion of the new members of the Guild from 1911 to 1948. These maps depict the occupational community and demonstrate the clustering of railwaymen and their families within one particular area.

⁸²⁵ Ibid., p. 38



Figure 9. Map showing the new members of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester, 1911-1921. Taken from the minutebooks held at Gloucestershire Archives. Reproduced from 1923 Ordinance Survey Map with the kind permission of the Ordnance Survey. Purchased from <http://www.old-maps.co.uk> [5/9/2015]

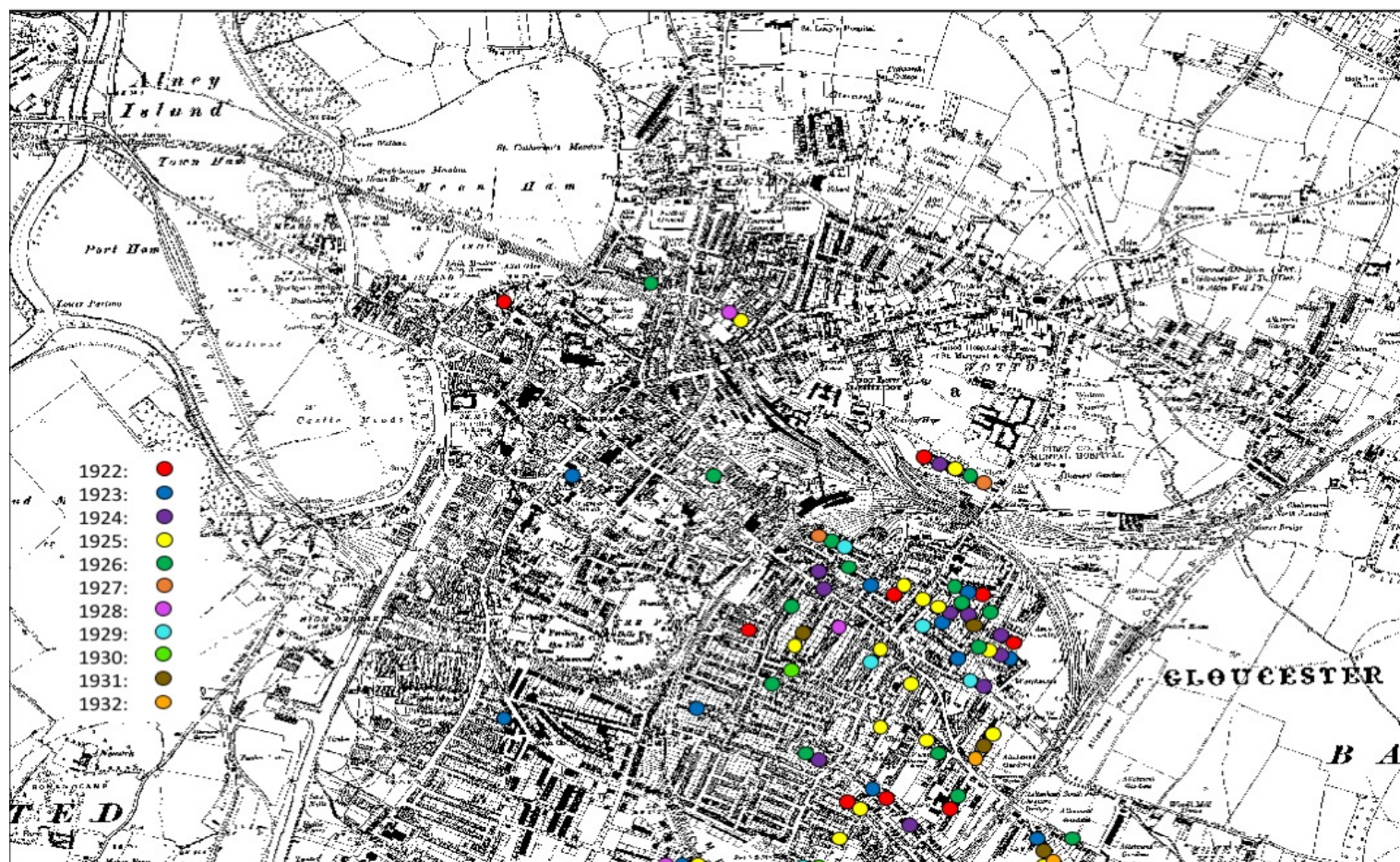


Figure 10. Map showing the new members of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester, 1922-1932. Taken from the minutebooks held at Gloucestershire Archives. Reproduced from 1923 Ordnance Survey Map with the kind permission of the Ordnance Survey. Purchased from <http://www.old-maps.co.uk> [5/9/2015]

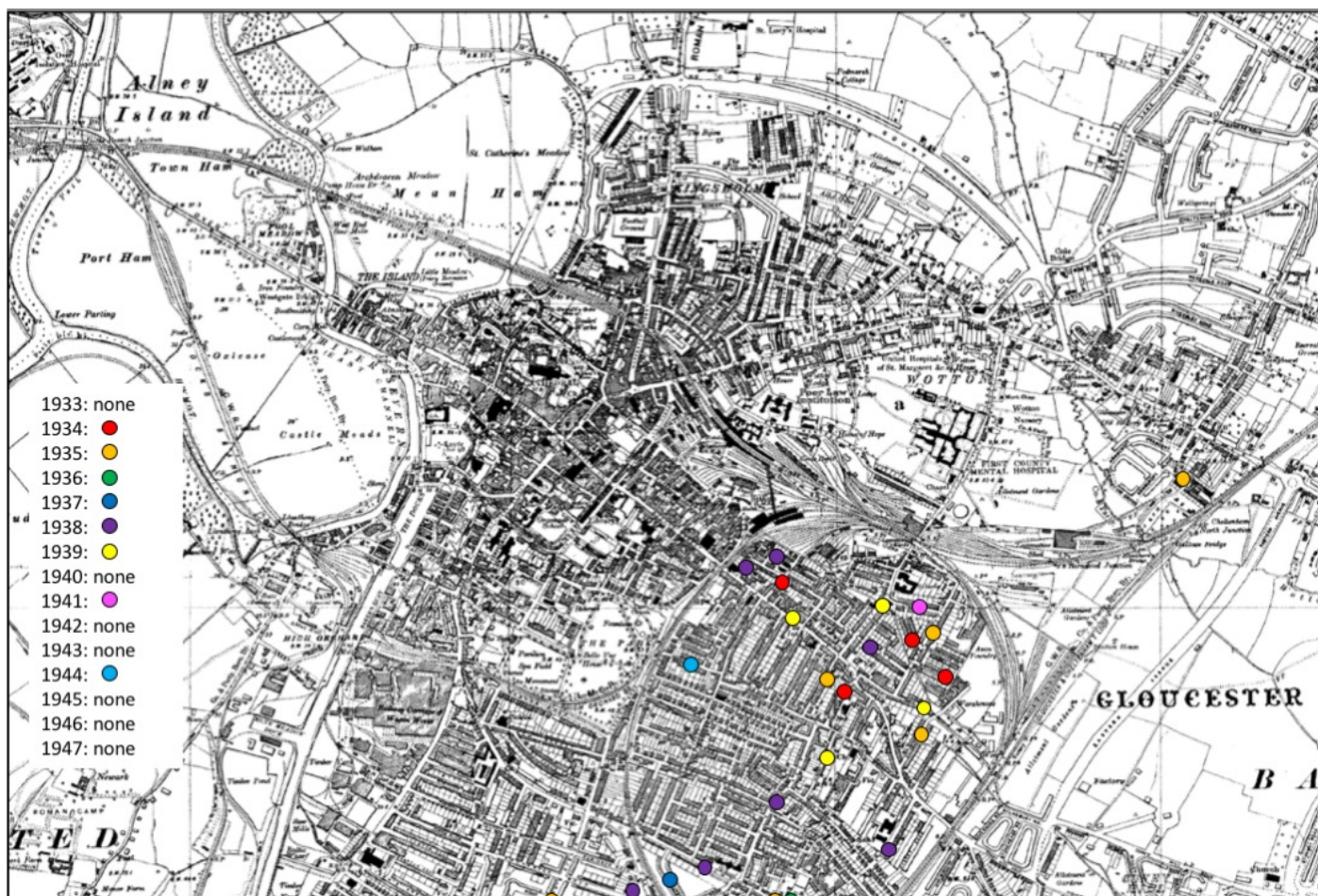


Figure 11. Map showing the new members of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester, 1933-1947. Taken from the minutebooks held at Gloucestershire Archives. Reproduced from 1938 Ordnance Survey Map with the kind permission of the Ordnance Survey. Purchased from <http://www.old-maps.co.uk> [13/1/2016]

During periods of industrial unrest such as 1919 and 1921, more women joined the Guild. Conversely, from the mid-1930s, there was a significant decrease in the number of new members joining. As Figure 11 shows, it fell to one or two a year. There were complaints in the minutebook about the lack of younger women willing to join the Guild, “you could not get the Young Women to take the interest in Guild work.”⁸²⁶ This was a familiar refrain in other women’s auxiliaries discussed in Chapter 5.⁸²⁷

Figure 9, Figure 10 and Figure 11 show the proximity of new members year on year joining from the same or neighbouring streets in one particular area of Gloucester. It is common in the minutebooks of the Gloucester Railway Women’s Guild to see mothers and daughters or neighbours joining the Guild together or encouraging one another to join. For example, Mrs Teague and Mrs Robinson, both of Adelaide Street joined together in November 1911.⁸²⁸ Similarly, Mrs Davis and Mrs Alden of 56 and 54 Derby Road joined together in September 1925.⁸²⁹

These maps also represent the continuity that existed in Gloucester with relation to the occupational community. Despite new housing being built across the city, railwaymen continued to cluster in a particular area that was central to their employment, union activities and with other members of the ‘railway family’. This occupational community was built upon the strength of the idea of the ‘railway family’ and was a way that railwaymen and their family members could provide support for those who worked in the same industry and understood its nature. The maps do not show the total number of women joining year on year. In some cases, the details of

⁸²⁶ RWG minutebook, 31/08/1946, D3128/6/8

⁸²⁷ Prochaska, ‘A Mother’s Country’, p.397

⁸²⁸ RWG minutebook, 02/11/1911, D3128/6/1

⁸²⁹ RWG minutebook, 24/09/1925, D3128/6/4

their address were not noted fully in the minutebook; in others, only their name was recorded. The graph in Figure 12 illustrates the total number of women who joined the RWG in Gloucester between 1911 and 1947. It is interesting to note that in periods of industrial unrest, such as 1919 and 1925, the number of women joining greatly increases, potentially prompted by the encouragement of their husbands and the trade union, or the encouragement of their neighbours who were already members of the Guild. In periods where time and money were limited, such as the two World Wars and the economic depression of the late 1920s, the number of women who joined the Guild decreased to the point that in some years no new members joined.

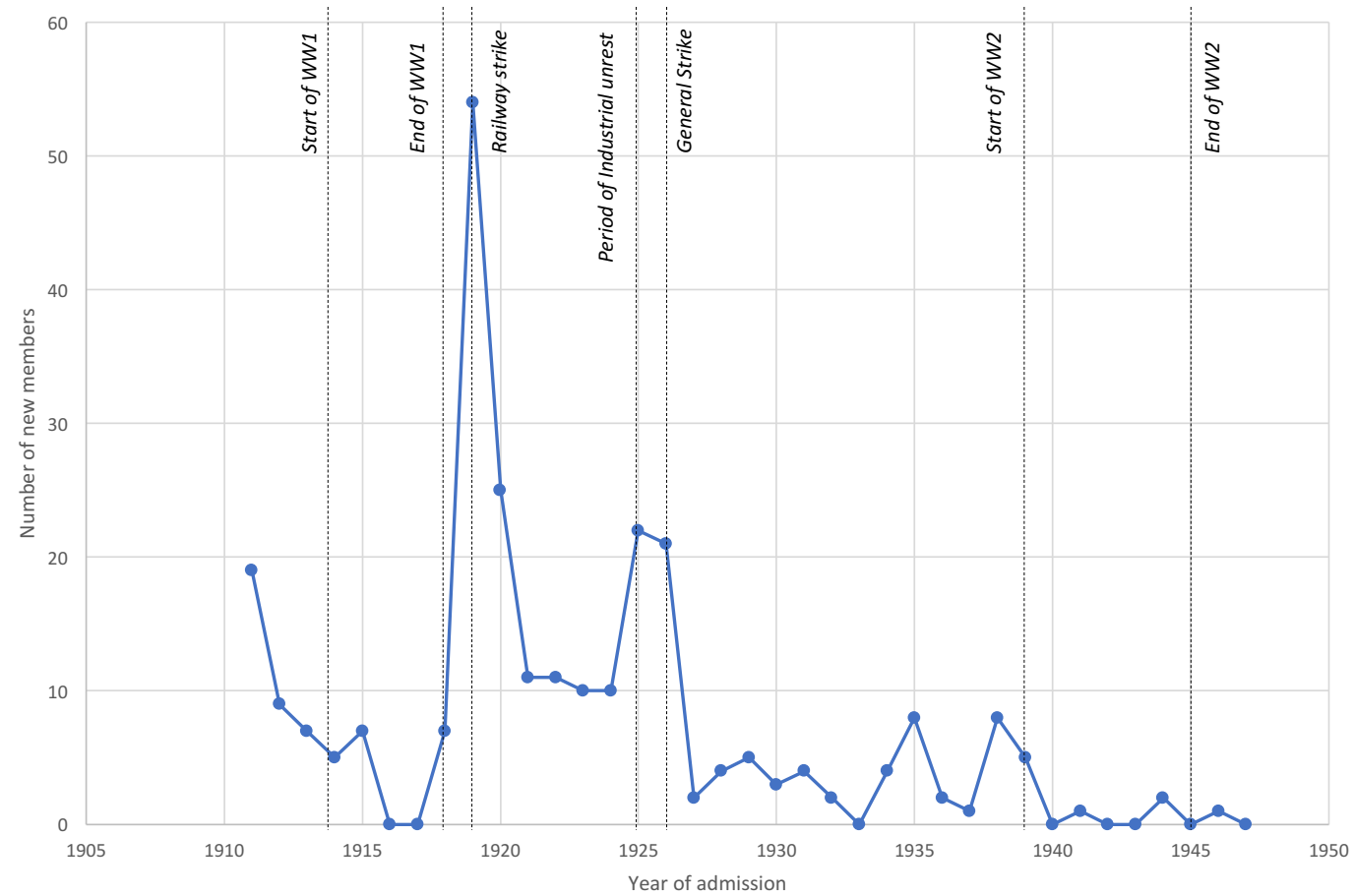


Figure 12. A graph showing the number of new members joining the RWG in Gloucester between 1911 and 1947 with significant dates highlighted.

6.3.3 The role of the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester

6.3.3.1 *Relationships between members*

The way that the members of the Gloucester Guild acted towards each other exemplifies the idea of the 'railway family' in practice. Wives and daughters of railwaymen were invited to join the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester in order to "lighten your own burdens and the cares of others by practical, sisterly sympathy."⁸³⁰ Guild members who were in distress were offered support; other members visited those who were sick and offered monetary support in the event that they or their husbands could not work or their children were ill. Sick visitors attended to all those who had notified the branch that they, or any member of their family, was unwell.⁸³¹ These visitors offered practical care and advice, money or gifts to improve health. For example in 1914, the son of one Gloucester Guild member, who was suffering from consumption, was given milk and an egg weekly for ten weeks in order to improve his health.⁸³² Another example from 1917 demonstrates the financial support Guild members were given as one Sister was given a grant because she was unable to work due to "poisoning her hand."⁸³³ Another member was given a grant to support her family after her husband had been unable to work for two years.⁸³⁴ The commitment to provide money or food for members in difficult circumstances continued throughout the life of the Guild. Even during difficult economic circumstances, such as the Second

⁸³⁰ *The Railway Review*, 06/04/1906, p.13

⁸³¹ *The Railway Review*, 01/01/1904, p.12

⁸³² RWG minutebook, 17/03/1914, D3128/6/1

⁸³³ RWG minutebook, 03/04/1917, D3128/6/3

⁸³⁴ RWG minutebook, 28/11/1918, D3128/6/3

World War, sick members were given eggs.⁸³⁵ There were conditions that were placed on this support however, as is demonstrated in February 1904 when the Guild raised 5s and 3d for Brother Holford but “We are sorry his wife is not a member of the Guild, as she would have received more benefits.”⁸³⁶ This acted as an inducement to join the Guild in order to receive more help and support but also as a warning to those Guild members who allowed their membership to fall into arrears.

A resolution passed unanimously by the Gloucester Guild stated that “We do not accept widows as members of our Guild.”⁸³⁷ One of the reasons for this was that the Guild did not want to offer the same level of financial support to widows whose husbands had not been in the NUR prior to their death or women who had not been in the Guild before they were widowed. Those who were widowed whilst they were members of the Guild were offered a great deal more support however, including Christmas gifts, free places on outings and at social events and financial or practical support if they were in need.⁸³⁸ The financial and moral support offered to other members and their families demonstrates the familial bond that grew up between members of the Guild in Gloucester who were willing to support one another in difficult times. This encapsulates the idea of the ‘railway family’ as defined by both the trade unions and railway companies: it was a support structure that drew non-working members of a railwayman’s family into the railway industry but it did not challenge the status quo as railwaymen remained the breadwinners. It was also bounded by strategic

⁸³⁵ RWG minutebook, 14/11/1940, D3128/6/7

⁸³⁶ *The Railway Review*, 26/02/1904, p.12

⁸³⁷ *The Railway Review*, 25/03/1904, p.11

⁸³⁸ *The Railway Review*, 27/01/1905, p.12

concerns that allowed the Guild to be a self-sufficient organisation thus no widows, who might have been a drain on finances, were permitted to join.

6.3.3.2 *Relationship with the ASRS/NUR*

For the railway companies and trade unions the loyalty and support of the wives of railwaymen, either moral or financial, was the most crucial aspect of a non-working woman's involvement in the idea of the 'railway family'. In Gloucester however, the Guild became involved in local and political campaigns that supported other members of the 'railway family' and women and children in the local community. These campaigns were written about extensively in the minutebooks of the Guild, the local newspapers and 'Our Women's Corner', the Guild column in *The Railway Review*. This allowed branches to advertise their meetings to their own members and to other women who were looking to join the Guild. The Gloucester Guild did this roughly every two weeks, in accordance with their meeting schedule. These reports included details of when and where the meeting was to be held, accounts from the business discussed at the meeting and any other useful information. The social element of the Gloucester Guild was often emphasised in the reports, fulfilling one of the important aims of the Railway Women's Guild. For example, women were invited to partake in an afternoon cup of tea that was enjoyed monthly and advertised in 'Our Women's Corner'.⁸³⁹ A pie supper to be held after the Guild meeting was advertised in February 1911 and the Annual Tea was always promoted which resulted in record numbers attending, often from other local Guilds. This again demonstrates that the trade union idea of the

⁸³⁹ *The Railway Review*, 15/01/1904, p.11

‘railway family’ encouraged kinship and co-operation across different localities, trades and parts of the city.⁸⁴⁰

As befitting their aims as an auxiliary of the NUR, the Guild supported the two local NUR branches, Gloucester No.1 and No.2 in many of their endeavours. This included maintaining the railway orphans, for example providing them with gifts and money at Christmas and organising a tea and concert for the NUR Orphan Fund.⁸⁴¹ This is an example of how the trade union idea of the ‘railway family’ was utilised to support the orphans of trade union men who had been killed whilst working on the railways – the ‘railway family’ and particularly those who were wives and mothers were supporting their own. Even more importantly to the union, the Railway Women’s Guild also provided financial, political and moral support for railwaymen during periods of industrial unrest. During the agitation for union recognition in the 1900s, the Executive Committee of the Railway Women’s Guild passed a resolution calling on women shareholders to put pressure on railway companies to recognise unions. This resolution was printed in the *Gloucester Citizen* to publicise the resolution to local female railway shareholders and demonstrate the commitment of the Guild to supporting the ASRS in their campaign for recognition by railway companies.⁸⁴²

The controversy over the dismissal of Guard Richardson from the Midland Railway Company for disobeying a superior officer’s order was a source of tension locally between the railway company and the trade unions in March 1913. It provoked the Railway Women’s Guild to issue a resolution from their meeting that “the

⁸⁴⁰ *The Railway Review*, 03/02/1911, p.6 and 25/11/1921, p.6

⁸⁴¹ RWG minutebook, 11/12/1917 and 10/03/1921, D3128/6/3

⁸⁴² *Gloucester Citizen*, 19/09/1907, p.4

Gloucester Railway Women's Guild, as wives of trade unionists pledge themselves to loyally support the men in any action they may deem it necessary to take, to ensure the reinstatement of Guard Richardson, and also to obtain a definition of "When is a Rule not a Rule."⁸⁴³ This resolution was printed in the *Gloucester Journal* alongside reports of the dispute between the Midland Railway Company and their employees over Guard Richardson.⁸⁴⁴ This dispute was resolved with the reinstatement of Richardson before any strike action occurred and thus the actions of the NUR and the Guild were effective.⁸⁴⁵ Their assertion in the resolution that they were the wives of trade unionists demonstrates the way that these women created an identity for themselves in a male-dominated industry and union; they saw themselves as part of the 'railway family' and thus had an important role in supporting their husbands, brothers and sons in their trade union business. Despite this resolution targeting only the Midland Railway Company, women whose husbands were in both companies supported it signifying that the trade unions were able to draw women into the 'railway family' to fight all injustices that railwaymen faced, not just those that were perpetrated by their husband's company.

The Railway Women's Guild was committed to supporting the union during the First World War. However, there were very few industrial disputes due to the new negotiation machinery that emerged between railway companies and trade unions during the War as a result of the wartime emergency whereby the Government forced

⁸⁴³ RWG minutebook, 06/03/1913, D3128/6/1

⁸⁴⁴ *Gloucester Journal*, 08/03/1913, p.11

⁸⁴⁵ Howell, *Respectable Radicals*, pp. 132 – 135 Guard Richardson was dismissed for refusing to add more wagons to a train at the behest of an inspector. The brakevan capacity had been reached and Richardson was following written regulations by not adding more wagons to the train.

the co-operation of the railway companies and the trade unions.⁸⁴⁶ The NUR and ASLEF were also able to safeguard the jobs of the thousands of railwaymen who fought during the war with the Restoration of Pre-War Practices Act. This prevented more labour unrest as the Act made it illegal to retain 'dilutees', employees who were hired 'for the duration' during the War, many of whom were women.⁸⁴⁷ Perhaps owing to this period of enforced acquiescence, the year after the end of the First World War saw a mass railway strike and the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester was encouraged to join forces with the NUR and ASLEF to support their husbands and other railwaymen out on strike. The President called an Extraordinary Committee meeting on the 1st October 1919 as, "the Strike Committee had asked her to arrange a Women's Meeting on Sunday October 5th under the auspices of the Women's Guild." A large joint meeting of the NUR, ASLEF and the Railway Women's Guild was arranged at the Gloucester Hippodrome. The speakers that the Railway Women's Guild invited were Miss Mary Carlin, National Organiser of the Dockers Union, Mrs Chandler of Cheltenham and Mrs W.L. Edwards, the wife of a local Labour Councillor. The Guild ordered 2000 Bills to be distributed in Gloucester to publicise the mass meeting.⁸⁴⁸ This meeting demonstrates the collaboration that took place between the Guild and the NUR when it came to trade union matters, one of the most important functions of the Railway Women's Guild in the eyes of the NUR and a way that women were welcomed into the 'railway family'. The success of the strike lay in the co-operation between all three railway trade unions

⁸⁴⁶ Ibid., p. 218

⁸⁴⁷ Smith, Harold, 'Sex vs Class: British Feminists and the Labour Movement, 1919 – 1929', *The Historian*, 47, 1 (1984) p. 22

⁸⁴⁸ RWG minutebook, 01/10/1919, D3128/6/3

and the high degree of support offered by non-working family members, thus the idea of the 'railway family' was working two-fold.

On a number of occasions Guild women were urged to be loyal to railwaymen in the President's opening address at their weekly meetings. There was anxiety at branch level in certain areas of the country about affiliating with the Railway Women's Guild and their loyalty to the trade union cause. In Gloucester the NUR branch and the Guild co-operated successfully on a number of occasions.⁸⁴⁹ In February 1921, when rumours of another strike were circulating, the President asked members to stand with their husbands if a strike took place.⁸⁵⁰ This strike did not occur because, in what became known as 'Black Friday', the transport union leaders refused to support the miners in their strike and thus the Triple Alliance of the NUR, the Miners Federation of Great Britain and the National Transport Workers Federation broke down.⁸⁵¹ 1921 remained a difficult year for railwaymen and at the Gloucester Guild Annual Tea in November 1921, the President addressed members and invited guests and "urged the members to remain loyal to their organisation and to assist their men folk in every way possible during the present trying period through which they were passing."⁸⁵² This speech also appeared in the local newspaper with the report of the Guild Annual Tea, emphasising to a wider audience that one of the most important aims of the Railway Women's Guild was to support the union and the 'railway family'.⁸⁵³

⁸⁴⁹ *The Railway Review*, 29/11/1901, p.7. For further discussion on the relationship between the Doncaster NUR branches and the Railway Women's Guild see Chapter 4

⁸⁵⁰ RWG minutebook, 10/02/1921, D3128/6/3

⁸⁵¹ The National Archives, *The Cabinet Papers, 1915 – 1986*, (2015)

<http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/black-friday-tuc.htm> [06/11/2015]

⁸⁵² RWG minutebook, 17/11/1921, D3218/6/3

⁸⁵³ *Gloucester Citizen*, 01/12/1921, p.5

Again in 1925, the Gloucester Railway Women's Guild President urged the members to "follow events very closely and to encourage our men folk to maintain that solidarity which is so essential at the present time."⁸⁵⁴ This demonstrates the desire of the local leadership of the Guild to ensure their members were educated in the affairs of the railway world, so that they could be effective in their support of their husbands and the NUR. The General Strike of 1926 provided a key opportunity for the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester to display their support for the NUR. During the strike, Guild members sat on strike and relief committees in order to organise propaganda, welfare and support for striking workers and their families. The Gloucester Guild supported the families of all striking railwaymen regardless of whether their wives were in the Guild, thus demonstrating the unifying effect that the idea of the 'railway family' was able to have. On the 20th May 1926, nine days after the strike was called off, "the Chairman referred to the recent crisis and urged all to stand together and to be united though there were many disappointments in the settlement."⁸⁵⁵

Politically the Guild was encouraged to support the local council and parliamentary candidates that the NUR proposed in Gloucester. In 'Our Women's Corner' the Guild asked for help campaigning for the NUR candidates in the up-coming local elections.⁸⁵⁶ This assistance in political campaigning was provided to NUR and Labour Party candidates even before women were given the vote in 1918. The trade unions believed that it was important to encourage women to vote for their preferred candidates because, when women were enfranchised in 1918 and 1928, there was a

⁸⁵⁴ RWG minutebook, 16/07/1925, D3218/6/4

⁸⁵⁵ RWG minutebook, 20/05/1926, D3218/6/4

⁸⁵⁶ *The Railway Review*, 17/10/1913, p.5

fear that women's votes would be detrimental to the political preferences of trade union men. The Guild were an important ally in the campaign to ensure railwaymen's wives voted in the way that the trade union deemed most beneficial to the 'railway family'. In this way, they were mobilising their social influence over the 'railway family' rather than exerting any control over political actions.

However, the relationship between the NUR and the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester was complicated, especially from the late 1920s onwards. There was more dissatisfaction expressed with the NUR and particularly its Gloucester branches by the Guild, for example in September 1926, the Guild meeting discussed the need for greater unity between the NUR and the Guild both in Gloucester and nationally.⁸⁵⁷ The Guild was also upset at being excluded from a meeting arranged by the NUR with Mr J.H Thomas, MP and the NUR General Secretary in February 1927.⁸⁵⁸ In March 1932, after an accusation from the local NUR branches that the Guild had members whose husbands were not in the union, the Secretary was instructed to write a letter which stated that there were no members of the Guild whose husbands were not in the NUR. They then issued a challenge to the branch that, "Furthermore if you think we have, it is up to you to give some concrete evidence in an official way."⁸⁵⁹ In December 1932, the Gloucester Guild received a letter from the National President of the Railway Women's Guild who wrote "an appeal to all members to stand loyally by the NUR", indicating that there may have been some tension between the Guild and the NUR outside Gloucester too.⁸⁶⁰

⁸⁵⁷ RWG minutebook, 23/09/1926, D3128/6/4

⁸⁵⁸ RWG minutebook, 10/02/1927, D3128/6/4

⁸⁵⁹ RWG minutebook, 31/03/1932, D3218/6/5

⁸⁶⁰ RWG minutebook, 08/12/1932, D3218/6/6

It was not until ten years later that the President of NUR, Frederick Burrows, attended a Gloucester Guild meeting in November 1943 and admitted that the NUR had not always been as supportive of the Railway Women's Guild as they should have been. He spoke of "the good work the women were doing and it was a pity (sic) the men did not realise this." At this meeting the Gloucester Guild President noted the fraught relationship between the Guild and NUR but stated that "we want to be mates walking together as we did as boys and girls and so help our men".⁸⁶¹ It is interesting to note the timing of this speech in 1943, during a period when women's influence was enhanced socially, politically and economically by the war time situation.

However, this complaint about the lack of support from the Gloucester NUR branch was nothing new. As early as 1904, the Gloucester Guild wrote that they would "like to have seen more brothers" at the joint social events that they organised.⁸⁶² This belated admission from the President of the NUR and the language used by the President of the Gloucester Guild indicate that the trade union deployment of the idea of the 'railway family' was complex. The role of women in the NUR itself was controversial – they were accepted with reluctance by many as full members from 1915, although the role they were able to play was limited and encouraged to be temporary.⁸⁶³ It appears that the Guild was not as trusted as their members would have hoped, despite the hard work they undertook for the union fundraising, organising meetings and providing moral support when necessary. The Guild remained a

⁸⁶¹ RWG minutebook, 25/11/1943, D3128/6/7

⁸⁶² *The Railway Review*, 06/05/1904, p.12

⁸⁶³ Wojtczak, *Railway Women*, p. 107. For more on the role of women in trade unions see Chapter 4

‘separate sphere’ for the wives and daughters of trade union railwaymen, despite their protestations that they were all part of one ‘railway family’.

During the Second World War, the number of members in the Gloucester Railway Women’s Guild dropped significantly and the Guild complained about the lack of help they had received from the men when it came to recruiting new members: “the men had not helped us much”.⁸⁶⁴ Encouraging women to join the Guild through their husbands as members of the NUR was one of the main ways that the Guild was able to recruit new members. However, this lack of support also worked both ways and the Guild did not always wholeheartedly support the NUR either. For example in August 1939, there was a discussion on a proposed labour strike for increased wages and Guild members agreed that, “although members were all in sympathy with the NUR and the 50s a week, they thought the present time hardly opportune to call a strike, owing to the international situation.”⁸⁶⁵ Calling a strike a few weeks before the start of the Second World War would not have garnered much public support for the NUR and the Guild were demonstrating their awareness of the broader attitudes to the trade union position.

However, criticism of the NUR by the Gloucester Guild was not the norm throughout the lifetime of the Guild as they were vociferous in their support of the NUR Orphan Fund and the campaigns the NUR mounted throughout the period 1902 to 1948. By assisting the NUR, providing them with financial support, moral support through printed resolutions and attendance at demonstrations and political support for their campaigns, the Railway Women’s Guild in Gloucester were fulfilling their

⁸⁶⁴ RWG minutebook, 28/09/1944, D3128/6/8

⁸⁶⁵ RWG minutebook, 24/08/1939, D3218/6/7

major founding aims and supporting the trade union idea of the 'railway family' both locally and nationally. The wives and daughters of unionised railwaymen were encouraged to back the campaigns of the NUR because they were beneficial to their husbands and to the women and their families as well. By supporting the NUR, Guild members were able to improve the lives of all members of the 'railway family' through the trade union. According to the NUR, these improvements could only occur if all railwaymen, and through them their wives in the Guild, were loyal to the NUR and to the 'railway family'.

6.3.3.3 The Widows Fund Campaign

The Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester is an excellent example of how the trade union idea of the 'railway family' worked in practice. This is demonstrated in particular through their initiation of a Widows Fund. Although a Widows Fund had been discussed in 'Our Women's Corner' and at Guild Annual Conferences from as early as 1900, the Gloucester branch of the Guild was the first branch to set up a Widows Fund in 1911. The report of the inauguration in 'Our Women's Corner' included a short report from Mrs Webb, National President of the Guild, congratulating the Gloucester Guild and stating that "we trust many other Guilds will follow their lead."⁸⁶⁶

The Widows Fund was designed to support Guild members who became widows and, as it was organised and funded wholly by the Guild, it demonstrates how the Guild deployed the idea of the 'railway family' in a caring and supportive role. Prior to the Widows Fund being set up, the Guild supported its widows with annual

⁸⁶⁶ *The Railway Review*, 27/10/1911, p.14

collections, free places at teas and outings and a gift at Christmas.⁸⁶⁷ They also took the unusual step of advertising the services of a widow needing to work through their column in 'Our Women's Corner': "The Guild takes this opportunity of recommending Mrs Young to the notice of any local reader who should be in want at any time of an assistant for household duties, nursing etc."⁸⁶⁸ From the article, it would appear that Mrs Young was not a Guild member therefore this demonstrates clearly the idea of the 'railway family' applied not just to those within the Guild but also those women connected to the railway industry who were not Guild members.

The money for the Widows Fund was raised through a series of Sales of Work; Guild members made items to be sold at these events. At one Sale of Work Mrs Henry Terrell, the wife of the local Conservative MP, raised £60 for the Widows Fund personally.⁸⁶⁹ The fact that the wife of a Conservative MP was so involved with a Fund organised by a trade union indicates that the Widows Fund was considered a broader issue than a male-organised political trade union campaign. By 1911, the Gloucester Guild had raised the £200 they required to invest in stocks and shares and on the advice of their Finance Committee, which included members of the Guild and three Brothers from the Gloucester ASRS No. 1 branch, they bought £200 of Consolidated Government Stock but were persuaded to sell this and purchase Midland Railway Company Stock three months later.⁸⁷⁰ Brothers Roberts, Holden, Spiers and Summer were asked to assist the Guild in purchasing their stocks and shares "on the condition that the final vote would be taken by Guild Committee...The responsibility would therefore rest on

⁸⁶⁷ *The Railway Review*, 27/01/1905, p.12

⁸⁶⁸ *The Railway Review*, 29/12/1905, p.5

⁸⁶⁹ *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 09/10/1909, p.7

⁸⁷⁰ RWG minutebook, 19/09/1911 and 03/12/1911, D3128/6/1

us, which would only be fair.”⁸⁷¹ This demonstrates the Gloucester Guild’s desire for independence but similarly their acknowledgement that they needed assistance and education on how to go about setting up the Fund. The need to put conditions on the involvement of ASRS male members shows that there was some anxiety that they would try to take over the business of the Fund.

The Widows Fund was set up because the ASRS did not allow for provision for widows even though the life of a railwaymen was precarious and his death left his wife and children in a financially vulnerable situation. As the Railway Women’s Guild was an organisation for the wives and daughters of railwaymen, they took up the widows’ cause and created the Widows Fund at branch level. A speech by District Organising Secretary Mr. J.J. Spiers at the inauguration of the Widows Fund in October 1911, explained why the ASRS did not provide for widows: “...because of the great expense. They kept the children until they were 14 years of age only but the widow might live to be 100 and besides with the present small wages of the railwaymen they could not bear the increased contributions.”⁸⁷²

The Gloucester Guild Widows Fund had its first claimant in August 1915. On the agreement of the Finance Committee, Sister Smart was awarded ten shillings on a monthly basis for a limited amount of time.⁸⁷³ This was raised to a £1 monthly for five months by 1919.⁸⁷⁴ The payments were time limited because the Guild could not afford to keep paying widows for the rest of their lives, but these payments did help them in their time of greatest need. The numbers of claims recorded in the minutebook for the

⁸⁷¹ RWG minutebook, 30/11/1911, D3128/6/1

⁸⁷² *Gloucester Citizen*, 20/10/1911, p.5

⁸⁷³ RWG minutebook, 31/08/1915, D3128/6/2

⁸⁷⁴ RWG minutebook, 25/02/1919, D3128/6/3

Gloucester RWG Widows Fund was small but the fact that the Gloucester Guild was the first to set up a Widows Fund and was able to continue this Fund and support their widows was a significant achievement. Only six claims were recorded from the Fund's creation in 1911 to 1947. Nevertheless, this shows that membership of the Guild was able to add an extra level of support to the wives and families of railwaymen in the NUR and demonstrates one of the most successful examples of the way that the trade union was able to use the idea of the 'railway family' in order to encourage women to join the Guild and thus became bound into the support network of the trade union. It is also indicative of the way that the 'railway family' sought to care for their own from the ground upwards, rather than relying on the railway company or the trade union. This meant that members of the 'railway family' did not have to accept poor relief or public assistance relief, to which there was a stigma attached.⁸⁷⁵

6.3.3.4 *Maternal and Infant Welfare Campaigns*

The Gloucester Railway Women's Guild spent a great deal of time focusing on campaigns that were outside the remit of the trade unions. One of the most important benefits of the Guild instituting the Widows Fund independently of the NUR was the confidence that this gave Guild members, who were then able to take up campaigning on other issues as 'women', rather than 'wives'. The Gloucester Guild President declared that, "as a woman we should support women" and the campaigns that the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester supported focused on improving the lives of

⁸⁷⁵ Thane, Pat, 'Women in the British Labour Party and the Construction of State Welfare, 1906 – 1939' in Koven, S. and Michel, S. (eds) *Mothers of a New World: Maternalist Politics and the Origins of the Welfare State* (Routledge, London, 1993) p. 347

women within the 'railway family', within the city of Gloucester and at a national level.⁸⁷⁶

A particularly important issue that the Gloucester Guild campaigned on throughout the period 1902 to 1948 was maternal and infant welfare, an issue that directly affected Guild members and the 'railway family'. They worked closely with the Women's Co-operative Guild in Gloucester because these concerns were shared between the two organisations and their co-operation gave the campaigns maximum impact. Also, as stated in *The Railway Review*, "the bulk of our members being co-operators" the joint working of the two organisations was both practical and ideologically coherent.⁸⁷⁷ In May 1910, the Guild sent a resolution to the local press and local MP about the Board of Guardians and maternity care stating, "This meeting of the Gloucester Railway Women's Guild protests against the proposal of the Government that the Board of Guardians shall pay the fee of a doctor called in cases of emergency to attend poor women in childbirth, as an insulting method of compulsory pauperism, and is of the opinion that, as the summoning of a doctor in such cases is required by law, his fee should be paid by the Public Health Authority without the infliction of the degrading stigma of Poor Relief."⁸⁷⁸ The Guild were conscious of the desire of many working-class women, including themselves, to remain 'respectable' and not be dependent on charity or poor relief. As Pat Thane has argued, the dividing line between 'rough' and 'respectable' was not as definitive as has previously been thought because unemployment, sickness or death could strike any worker at any time.⁸⁷⁹ The focus on

⁸⁷⁶ RWG minutebook, 13/05/1943, D3128/6/7

⁸⁷⁷ *The Railway Review*, 24/08/1906, p.13

⁸⁷⁸ *Gloucester Citizen*, 23/05/1910, p.5

⁸⁷⁹ Thane, 'Women in the British Labour Party', p. 347

respectability was a personal concern for Guild members but also for other members of the 'railway family' and the wider community, all of whom had the possibility to be tainted with stigma of being considered 'rough'.

Another campaign that focused on the idea of respectability was the Guild's appeal to the Government to release Iris Howe, a twenty-one year old pregnant woman who was sentenced to three years penal servitude for throwing acid at her former lover and another woman he was 'stepping out' with. The Guild wanted her released "so that her child may not start life handicapped by the stigma of having been born in prison."⁸⁸⁰ The Guild continued their campaign to ensure the care and reputation of children born in prison with a resolution to the Railway Women's Guild Annual Conference in 1937, "That this Conference urges the Government to apply special facilities to expectant mothers who are convicted in our Law Courts so that their babies may be born free of the taint of Prison."⁸⁸¹ The desire for 'respectability' for women and children was a theme that ran through a number of maternal and infant welfare campaigns with which the Guild were involved.

An important resolution was passed at a Guild meeting in 1913 in order to support baby clinics, a campaign with which the Women's Co-operative Guild was heavily involved. The Guild resolution stated "that in view of the high infantile death rate and the large number of children who enter school suffering from physical defects – we urge the Government to encourage local authorities to establish baby clinics for the medical treatment of babies and children under school age, and to make grants

⁸⁸⁰ *Gloucester Journal*, 04/10/1924, p.4. Also, *Portsmouth Evening News*, 17/09/1924, p.5 for details of Iris Howe's case

⁸⁸¹ RWG minutebook, 25/03/1937, D3128/6/6

from the National Fund.”⁸⁸² This resolution was sent to the local press, Gloucester’s MP Henry Terrell and the Board of Education. A letter appeared in the *Gloucester Journal* from Mr Terrell who agreed with the Guild resolution that baby clinics were a necessity.⁸⁸³ Another letter in the *Gloucester Journal* the following week from Mr M.P. Price, a Liberal Parliamentary candidate, supported the Guild resolution on baby clinics and demonstrated the backing the RWG was able to secure from high profile sources for their campaigns in Gloucester.⁸⁸⁴ The Guild did not stop at just urging official action but acted informally too. A ‘Mothers’ Club’ was introduced in Gloucester in 1911 by a “Ladies Committee” in order to educate mothers and for nurses to monitor babies.⁸⁸⁵ The Railway Women’s Guild President was elected to sit on the committee for the Mother’s Club and the Guild contributed 10 shillings a year for a number of years.⁸⁸⁶ By 1919, the City Council also pledged £200 to the Mother’s Club which saw 4915 babies a year.⁸⁸⁷

The Women’s Co-operative Guild often lectured on baby clinics and Guild members were invited to attend.⁸⁸⁸ The Women’s Co-operative Guild invited two Guild delegates to attend a meeting on Maternity Care and form a deputation to the Mayor in November 1914.⁸⁸⁹ Throughout this period the Railway Women’s Guild in Gloucester was involved in public meetings and committees on infant and maternal welfare.⁸⁹⁰ The

⁸⁸² RWG minutebook, 06/11/1913, D3128/6/1

⁸⁸³ *Gloucester Journal*, 31/01/1914, p.3

⁸⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 07/02/1914, p.10

⁸⁸⁵ MOH Reports, 1911, p. 11

⁸⁸⁶ RWG minutebook, 24/11/1914, D3128/6/2 and *The Railway Review*, 18/12/1914, p.5

⁸⁸⁷ MOH Reports, 1919, p. 18

⁸⁸⁸ RWG minutebook, 30/04/1914, D3128/6/1 and 16/03/1915, D3128/6/2

⁸⁸⁹ RWG minutebook, 24/11/1914, D3128/6/2

⁸⁹⁰ RWG minutebook, 20/05/1926, D3128/6/4 and 22/11/1934, D3128/6/6

Maternity and Child Welfare Act of 1918 included a number of elements that local councils were not obliged to provide including infant welfare centres, salaried midwives and health visitors.⁸⁹¹ The Guild spent the inter-war years persuading Gloucester Council to institute these elements, which the local Medical Officer of Health Reports demonstrate that they did with some success.⁸⁹² Not only was this beneficial to women in the local community, it also benefitted the 'railway family' and indirectly, the railway companies and trade unions who did not have to create funds to take care of railwaymen's wives and children.

The infant mortality rate in Gloucester was 87.8 per thousand in 1913 when the first Guild baby clinic resolution was passed. Compared to the other large towns in Britain, this was relatively low, as the average infant mortality rate for these towns was 116 per thousand.⁸⁹³ Fifteen years later, this had dropped to 68.5 per thousand and the average for England and Wales had dropped to 65 per thousand.⁸⁹⁴ The Guild was invited onto the committee of the Voluntary Association for Infant Welfare and the City Health Committee for maternity care.⁸⁹⁵ They were involved in a 'Baby Week' campaign in June 1929 that provided a series of lectures, practical lessons and exhibitions to educate women on ante and postnatal health and the care of babies and children.⁸⁹⁶ Ellen Ross argues that infant mortality was reduced by an increase in wages and

⁸⁹¹ Thane, 'Women in the British Labour Party', p. 363

⁸⁹² MOH Reports, 1922, p.6 reports that there were 271 health talks in Gloucester throughout the year and 208 women at Antenatal classes. MOH Reports, 1923, p.27 states that there was now a Superintendent of Infant Welfare in the city who was responsible for six centres

⁸⁹³ MOH Reports, 1913, p. 9, GBR/N2/11/3

⁸⁹⁴ MOH Reports, 1928, pp. 23 - 24 GBR/N2/11/3

⁸⁹⁵ *The Railway Review*, 29/01/1915, p.7

⁸⁹⁶ *Gloucester Citizen*, 20/06/1929, p.7

improvement in living conditions throughout this period.⁸⁹⁷ However, without the involvement of the Railway Women's Guild and the Women's Co-operative Guild in campaigning for and supporting the baby clinics and welfare reforms with time and money, large numbers of working class women would not have had access to the type of care that was available in Gloucester.

Maternal and infant mortality was an issue that affected members of the Guild in Gloucester and this was an important reason why these campaigns loomed so large over Guild business from 1913 onwards. The minutebooks record condolences to Guild members when their children passed away. One striking example of the 'railway family' in practice was how the Guild dealt with the case of a Sister who had not been a member long enough to be eligible for a death grant when her child died. There was a discussion over whether to pay her a sum in lieu of this grant and the decision was taken to hold a collection for their bereaved member that raised fifteen shillings.⁸⁹⁸ This is an excellent example of the power of the 'railway family' to take care of those in need and mobilise to effect change. This informal collection also helped avoid setting a difficult precedent of rule-breaking for Sister's in need but ensured that the Guild could circumvent the established procedure when they felt it was necessary.

Finally, from the mid-1920s onwards the Railway Women's Guild became involved in birth control campaigns, an important issue connected with maternal and women's welfare. The Guild began a committee to arrange a birth control meeting that culminated in Mrs Ella Gordon of the Birth Control Clinic, Wolverhampton, speaking at

⁸⁹⁷ Ross, *Love and Toil*, p. 196

⁸⁹⁸ RWG minutebook, 09/02/1920 and RWG minutebook, 12/02/1920, D3128/6/3

the meeting in November 1925.⁸⁹⁹ A report in the *Gloucestershire Chronicle* noted that four hundred women attended the lecture, many more women than were members of the Guild and this was indicative of both women's interest in the subject and the power of the Guild to organise mass meetings. A resolution was passed calling on Public Health Authorities to provide information on birth control for those who wanted it, "while in no way criticising the view of those who from scientific or moral reasons were opposed to the practice of birth control."⁹⁰⁰ Nurse Fowler of the Gloucester Birth Control Clinic came to give "an interesting and instructive address on Birth Control" at a Guild meeting in October 1930.⁹⁰¹

Birth control was a controversial campaign for the Guild to support because it had many opponents including trade unions and those within the Labour Party who refused to discuss or support any birth control resolutions until the early 1930s.⁹⁰² Harold Smith argues that the Labour party and trade unions attempted to quash any feminist activity amongst women in the Labour Party (many in the Railway Women's Guild were Labour Party members too), yet there is no record of the Gloucester NUR branches opposing any of the Guild policies of maternal and infant welfare.⁹⁰³ Thus the trade unions could be ideologically opposed to certain policies but male unionists as individuals saw the benefits of policies such as birth control. This was certainly the case for the NUR, as the discussion of birth control and *The Railway Review* in Chapter 4 demonstrates.

⁸⁹⁹ RWG minutebook, 05/11/1925, D3128/6/4

⁹⁰⁰ *Gloucestershire Chronicle*, 13/11/1925, p.9

⁹⁰¹ RWG minutebook, 02/10/1930, D3128/6/5

⁹⁰² Smith, 'Sex vs Class', p. 27

⁹⁰³ *Ibid.*, p. 35

The Guild chose to be affiliated to many other women's groups, including the Women's Co-operative Guild and the Women's Labour League. They supported studies conducted by official groups, such as *Working-Class Wives* by Marjory Spring Rice on behalf of the Women's Health Enquiry Committee that called for greater access to birth control for women in order to prevent poverty and maternal ill-health and mortality.⁹⁰⁴ Although this campaigning was not specifically linked to the aims of the NUR or the Railway Women's Guild, it helped the Guild foster its members confidence and the creation of an independent Guild identity whilst also supporting the beliefs and priorities of their female members. The 'railway family' both locally and nationally benefitted from the campaigning undertaken by the Guild in Gloucester, particularly on the issues that surrounded maternal and infant welfare.

6.3.3.5 *Pacifism Campaigns*

During the First World War the NUR did not support any particular pacifist campaigns, but they were against conscription, profiteering and began to call for an end to the war in 1917.⁹⁰⁵ In accordance with the policies of the NUR and the labour movement in general, supporting pacifist and peace campaigns became an important part of the work done by the Railway Women's Guild. In July 1919, the Guild sent a resolution to the Prime Minister, David Lloyd George, and the local Gloucester MP stating, "That we are of the opinion that armed intervention in Russia is entirely unjustifiable and calculated to make impossible that world peace for which we are hoping. We also demand the immediate fulfilment of the Prime Minister's promise that

⁹⁰⁴ Spring Rice, Marjory, *Working-Class Wives* (Virago Ltd, London, 1981) First published in 1939, p.199

⁹⁰⁵ Bagwell, *The Railwaymen*, pp. 368 - 369

scription should cease as a beginning of universal disarmament.”⁹⁰⁶ This resolution was due to the intervention by Allied Forces into the Russian Civil War; it was less concerned with the politics of the situation between the countries and more concerned with the potential loss of life caused by military intervention which was detrimental to all those in the ‘railway family’ and in the local and national ‘imagined community’ cultivated by the railway industry.

A similar resolution was sent to the local press and Gloucester MP in 1920 that stated, “this meeting emphatically protests against the Allied Governments giving assistance in any form to Poland against Soviet Russia. We further pledge ourselves to render every assistance to the Trade Union and Labour movement generally to resist the menace of war with Russia, and call upon all women citizens to protest equally with us remembering the sacrifices they have been called upon to bear as a result of the last war.”⁹⁰⁷ This resolution emphasised not only the Gloucester Guild’s support for the trade union and the labour movement in a public way but also underlined the sacrifice that many women felt they had made during the First World War, especially in relation to the loss or injury of their husbands and sons.⁹⁰⁸ By committing themselves to pacifist campaigns and demonstrating their allegiance to the trade union and labour movement the Guild were emphasising the new role they were able to play now that many of their members were ‘citizens’, with the right to vote in elections and support the political party of their choice. The vast majority of members of the Guild in Gloucester would have been eligible to vote in the first parliamentary election that

⁹⁰⁶ RWG minutebook, 31/07/1919, D3128/6/3

⁹⁰⁷ RWG minutebook, 14/08/1920, D3128/6/3

⁹⁰⁸ Grayzel, Susan, *Women’s Identities at War: gender, motherhood and politics in Britain and France during the First World War* (University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1999) p. 227

women were able to participate in in 1918. Pacifist campaigns can be viewed as a way that the Guild was seeking to protect the 'railway family' from further dislocation and harm caused by war and an unwillingness to see British men fight fellow workers elsewhere.

The Railway Women's Guild was also involved with the Gloucester branch of the League of Nations union. They agreed a number of resolutions encouraging the Government to submit matters of war to the League of Nations including one resolution in September 1922 that appeared in the *Gloucester Citizen* and was directed to the Prime Minister, Lloyd George, Gloucester's MP, Sir James Bruton, the Bishop of Gloucester and the Free Church Council. It stated that "this meeting protests against this country being involved in War in the Near East and calls upon the Government to submit the matter to the League of Nations."⁹⁰⁹ Another resolution against the action of the British Government in Egypt urged the Government to "take all necessary steps to have all outstanding questions referred to the League of Nations."⁹¹⁰ The Guild was represented on the local sub-committee of League of Nations union for a reduction in armaments.⁹¹¹

The Railway Women's Guild worked with a number of other organisations including the Women's Co-operative Guild in Gloucester to campaign locally and nationally for peace. In 1926, the Gloucester branch was represented at a mass meeting in Hyde Park to campaign for peace and then helped to organise another mass meeting in Gloucester.⁹¹² Moreover, the Guild attended a joint meeting with other organisations

⁹⁰⁹ RWG minutebook, 21/09/1922, D3128/6/3 and *Gloucester Citizen*, 23/09/1922, p.5

⁹¹⁰ *Gloucester Journal*, 13/12/1924, p.24

⁹¹¹ RWG minutebook, 23/2/1928, D3128/6/5

⁹¹² *Gloucester Journal*, 26/06/1926, p.5

to “mobilise pacifist opinion” and protest against war with China in April 1927. A resolution was passed at this meeting that “we will not assist in any way the production or distribution of war material, and that we will do our utmost to create public opinion to the same end.”⁹¹³ The Railway Women’s Guild was invited to attend a march with the Women’s Co-operative Guild through Gloucester and to wear a white poppy on Armistice Day, 11th November 1936 to “let the people see we were out for Peace and not for war.”⁹¹⁴ The Guild agreed to this, although it is not recorded how many members attended this march or wore a white poppy. Wearing a white poppy was one way that the members of the Guild could show their support for peace and an end to all wars; white poppies were first sold by the Women’s Co-operative Guild in 1933 and the Peace Pledge Union a year later.⁹¹⁵

The Gloucester Guild continued to attend meetings, demonstrations and peace committees throughout the 1920s and 1930s. There was a representative of the Guild on the Gloucester Peace Committee who reported on these meetings at to the branch.⁹¹⁶ As the Second World War approached in the late 1930s the Guild increased the number of committees their members were represented on, for example two Guild delegates were sent to the Peace Conference in 1937 and 1938 and the Guild affiliated to the Peace Council in 1938.⁹¹⁷

Once the Second World War began in 1939, the Gloucester Guild threw its efforts into war work, supporting the local community and each other. However

⁹¹³ Ibid., 02/04/1927, p.19

⁹¹⁴ RWG minutebook, 21/10/1936, D3128/6/6

⁹¹⁵ Women’s Co-operative Guild (2016) <http://www.cooperativewomensguild.coop/> [11/01/2016] and Peace Pledge Union (2016) <http://www.ppu.org.uk/whitepoppy/index.html> [11/01/2016]

⁹¹⁶ RWG minutebook, 09/09/1926, D3128/6/4

⁹¹⁷ RWG minutebook, 18/11/1937, 13/01/1938 and 10/3/1938, D3128/6/6

members also raised funds and knitted clothes and attended lectures on the plight of women and children in Soviet Russia.⁹¹⁸ The Guild remained concerned with the needs of Russia during the War as the President's address at the start of one meeting emphasised the need to keep supporting the Russians who were "fighting well" for Britain.⁹¹⁹ Miss Jordan of the Russia Today Society addressed the Guild in July 1943.⁹²⁰ Russia joined the Allies after their invasion by Germany in June 1941 and the people of Russia suffered greatly over the following four years. For example, over one million people starved to death after the German army besieged Leningrad.⁹²¹ The Guild attempted to support the many women and children who were suffering through war, both in Britain and internationally. By supporting pacifist and peace campaigns the Guild ensured that they continued to fulfil their aim of assisting the NUR with their endeavours but they were also able to fulfil their own agenda concerning women, children and the 'railway family' which led them to affiliate to other organisations such as the Gloucester League of Nations Union and the Women's Co-operative Guild.

6.3.3.6 *Old Age Pensions Campaigns*

The Gloucester branch of the Railway Women's Guild was committed to raising old age pensions and the standard of living for pensioners. This campaign was beneficial to all men and women but can likewise be seen as a way that the Guild was seeking to ensure their members and the 'railway family' was cared for in old age. A

⁹¹⁸ RWG minutebook, 05/02/1942, D3128/6/7

⁹¹⁹ RWG minutebook, 17/09/1942, D3128/6/7

⁹²⁰ RWG minutebook, 22/07/1943, D3128/6/7

⁹²¹ Overy, Richard, *The Soviet-German War, 1941 – 1945* (2011)

http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/worldwars/wwtwo/soviet_german_war_01.shtml [16/11/2015]

resolution on old age pensions was sent to the Prime Minister, H.H. Asquith, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Reginald McKenna, the local Gloucester MP, Henry Terrell and local press during the First World War stating "That having regard to the increased cost of living and the pitiable position of old age pensioners caused thereby, we urge the Government to take steps to immediately increase the old age pensions from 5 shillings to 7/6 per week."⁹²² The Government did not raise the old age pension so another resolution was sent in August 1916 to emphasise this point.⁹²³ The Gloucester Guild was committed to ensuring a rise in pensions to cope with the increased cost of living during the First World War so they supported the Miners Federation resolution that pensions be increased to 10 shillings in October 1917.⁹²⁴

A resolution to increase pensions in July 1919 underlines one of the reasons why this issue was so important to the Railway Women's Guild, "That we urge the Government to raise the old age pension to £1 a week, irrespective of other income derived from friendly societies, superannuation, etc."⁹²⁵ Although many railwaymen were entitled to a pension on their retirement from railway service, this was not enough to provide a comfortable retirement for all railway families. An increase in pensions would help to support the wives of railwaymen in their old age and protect the 'railway family'. The campaign for a raise in pensions was provoked by a rise in the cost of living during the First and Second World War. In the inter-war period, other issues superseded the Gloucester Guild campaigning on pensions, although the Guild did send a small number of resolutions to local parliamentary candidates and MPs. One

⁹²² RWG minutebook, 24/02/1916, D3128/6/2

⁹²³ RWG minutebook, 22/08/1916, D3128/6/3

⁹²⁴ RWG minutebook, 16/10/1917, D3128/6/3

⁹²⁵ RWG minutebook, 31/07/1919, D3128/6/3

resolution sent to local parliamentary candidates focused on endowing pensions for all at age sixty.⁹²⁶ Another resolution sent to Parliament in 1938 encouraged the Government to increase pensions for those in old age and widows.⁹²⁷ Mrs Turner-Samuels, wife of the prospective Labour candidate, also addressed the Gloucester Guild on the subject of old age pensions in July 1939.⁹²⁸ Despite focusing on more prominent issues during the inter-war period, care of the elderly still remained a concern for the 'railway family'.

The Guild was determined to ensure one of their members was able sit on the Old Age Pensions Committee in Gloucester from 1939 due to the rising cost of living during the Second World War.⁹²⁹ Guild members were unsatisfied with the way that the Government provided for pensioners during the War, as a complaint in the President's opening address to a Guild meeting demonstrated. She claimed that the Government had "not been able to give the Old Age Pensioners more money or the Railwaymen better wages but the shares had gone up, the share-holders had there (sic) money."⁹³⁰ From the late 1930s onwards there were very few young women joining the Guild, as complaints in the minutebook indicate.⁹³¹ The aging membership of the Gloucester Guild suggests that part of their concern with old age pensions was because they themselves were reaching an age where they would be required to live off their husband's pension. Another resolution was sent to the local MP and Sir John Simon, Chancellor of the Exchequer that "The members of the NUR Women's Guild deplore the

⁹²⁶ RWG minutebook, 16/05/1929, D3128/6/5

⁹²⁷ RWG minutebook, 20/10/1938, D3128/6/7

⁹²⁸ RWG minutebook 27/07/1939, D3128/6/7

⁹²⁹ RWG minutebook, 19/10/1939, D3128/6/7

⁹³⁰ RWG minutebook, 25/01/1940, D3128/6/7

⁹³¹ RWG minutebook, 31/08/1946, D3128/6/8

recommendations of Sir John Simon's Bill with regards pensions considering it an insult to offer under the conditions to be imposed such an inadequate sum which will only be granted after enquiries have been made as to the Pensioners position. We also deplore the proposed added burden to the wage earners who will be called upon to pay what should be a charge on the National Exchequer only."⁹³² This resolution was in reference to the proposed Means Test that Sir John Simon's Bill sought to introduce, which supplemented pensions if a household could prove the need for extra income. The burden on wage earners described above referred to the reduction in the age of pensions for insured women from sixty-five to sixty, and the fact that wives of contributory pensioners of sixty-five would be allowed to claim a pension at sixty. This was to be paid for through increased contributions from employers and employees.⁹³³ Although this Bill may have worked in the favour of a number of Guild members, RWG members were unlikely to be insured women and the household Means Test was viewed as intrusive and an affront to respectability, akin to the claims on the Poor Law that the Guild sought to help expectant mothers avoid. The extra contributions were considered a burden that railwaymen and their families could not afford.

Throughout 1940 there was a continued discussion at Guild meetings on pensions for those over sixty and spinsters, and further complaints against the Means Test for old age pensions.⁹³⁴ Pensions were a concern for the NUR and this campaign demonstrates the Guild fulfilling one of their primary aims, which was to support the

⁹³² RWG minutebook, 25/01/1940, D3128/6/7

⁹³³ *The Spectator*, 26/01/1940, <http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/26th-january-1940/2/old-age-pension-changes> [10/11/2015]

⁹³⁴ RWG minutebook, 04/04/1940 and 25/07/1940, D3128/6/7

union. They were also concerned with protecting the 'railway family' and ensuring its members were taken care of in old age by the State.

The campaigns that the Railway Women's Guild supported were successful in meeting the wider aims of the Guild which were primarily to assist the NUR and support each other. Providing moral and financial support to the NUR ensured that the Guild cemented its place within the NUR in Gloucester, although their official position within the union remained complicated. More importantly to the women who were members of the Guild, they used their campaigning efforts to help each other, women in the local community and the wider 'railway family' in Gloucester and beyond. The Widows Fund, access to birth control, increases in old age pensions and maternal and infant welfare improvements were of the greatest benefit to women and demonstrate the Guild's commitment to women's issues. These campaigns were particularly valuable to women within the 'railway family' both locally and nationally. This campaigning also contributed to the formation of an identity for Gloucester Guild members as part of the idea of the 'railway family' and as women, a wives and mothers.

6.4 The ASLEF Women's Society and Gloucester

The Railway Women's Guild was not the only women's trade union auxiliary that existed in Gloucester. ASLEF also encouraged the formation of a women's auxiliary. The ASLEF Women's Society was instituted nationally in 1925. Previously, the wives of ASLEF members had been admitted to membership of the Railway Women's Guild but many joined the ASLEF Women's Society when it was founded in Gloucester in 1925. Initially the membership of the Women's Society branch in

Gloucester stood at 25.⁹³⁵ The formation of this branch was viewed positively by ASLEF men in Gloucester as the visit of Mrs Bromley, the President of the Women's Society, to a joint meeting of the Gloucester and Cheltenham ASLEF branches demonstrated: "At each of these places the men's secretaries came and welcomed me, and said how proud they were of our Women's Society".⁹³⁶

It is more challenging to uncover records of this women's trade union auxiliary, however the minutebook of the ASLEF Gloucester branch does mention the local Women's Society and they appear in the women's pages of the *Locomotive Journal*. The Gloucester Women's Society is first mentioned in October 1925 in connection with a Joint Committee meeting between the ASLEF branch and the Women's Society branch.⁹³⁷ This joint committee meeting was held with regard to arranging a children's tea party; at this meeting the organisation of the entertainment was allotted to the Women's Society.⁹³⁸ Another Joint Committee meeting was held a month later to discuss the Christmas Tea.⁹³⁹ Thereby a similar pattern was followed over the next twelve years, with the Women's Society invited to joint committee meetings to discuss arrangements for social events or the Women's Society inviting the ASLEF branch to their social gatherings, for example, their New Year's Party in December 1928 or their Annual Tea in 1930.⁹⁴⁰ This is confirmed by the Women's Society branch reports that appeared in the *Locomotive Journal* that focused on the social and organisational

⁹³⁵ RWG minutebook, 23/03/1920, D3128/6/3, 08/05/1924, 29/01/1925 D3128/6/4 and *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 3 (1925) p.124

⁹³⁶ *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 5 (1925) p.217

⁹³⁷ ASLEF branch records, 10/10/1925, Gloucestershire Archives, D3033/1/2

⁹³⁸ ASLEF branch records, 01/11/1925, D3033/1/2

⁹³⁹ ASLEF branch records, 06/12/1925, D3033/1/2

⁹⁴⁰ ASLEF branch records, 12/1928 and 12/01/1930, D3033/1/2

aspects of the branch.⁹⁴¹ Much of the ASLEF branch involvement with the Women's Society in Gloucester was regarding socialising and arranging social events, rather than the political campaigning that the NUR and the Railway Women's Guild undertook together.

Fundraising appeared to be a key concern for ASLEF and the Women's Society. Some of these fundraising campaigns were a joint effort between the Women's Society and the Railway Women's Guild in Gloucester. In their dealings with the NUR and the Railway Women's Guild in particular, the ASLEF branch took their lead from the Women's Society over fundraising matters. They refused to take part in the Railway Women's Guild Orphan Fund effort because, "seeing as the Women's Society are not taking part in this we also shall not entertain it."⁹⁴² The ASLEF branch did choose to support the Joint Women's Stall (Women's Society and Railway Women's Guild) at the Royal Infirmary Carnival of July 1930.⁹⁴³ Jointly the two women's auxiliaries raised £22, 5s and 1 and a half pence for the Infirmary with their stall.⁹⁴⁴ Although these two women's auxiliaries came together to support charitable causes within the 'railway family' and the city, there was a fierce loyalty to their parent union who were often at odds with one another and therefore this collaboration was sporadic. Chapter 4 discusses the tensions between the ASRS/NUR and ASLEF that emerged throughout the period. Due to these tensions, each auxiliary instead preferred to focus on their own fundraising efforts for the institutions with which they were connected.

⁹⁴¹ For example, see *Locomotive Journal*, 38, 12 (1925) p.579 and 40, 2 (1926) p.83

⁹⁴² ASLEF branch records, 10/01/1926, D3033/1/2

⁹⁴³ ASLEF branch records, 08/06/1930, D3033/1/2

⁹⁴⁴ *Locomotive Journal*, 43, 9 (1930) p.442

There was very little interaction between the ASLEF branch and the Women's Society in Gloucester with regard to anything outside fundraising or socialising. The only union event that the Women's Society became involved in was an open meeting held at the Parkend Empire in March 1926 on behalf of the Joint Committee. The speakers were Mr John Bromley, M.P and ASLEF General Secretary and his wife, Mrs Ann Bromley, General Secretary of the Women's Society. All locomotivemen and their wives were invited to attend this meeting and the committee arranged for the printing of "24 large bills" to advertise this event.⁹⁴⁵ Having both the General Secretaries of the union and the Women's Society speak in Gloucester was a great boon and had the potential to encourage large numbers of locomotivemen and their wives to join the trade union and its respective auxiliary.

When writing to locomotivemen to invite them to join ALSEF, their wives were also included in this letter which stated that, "We suggest that you and your wife will give careful consideration to the suggestion of joining our Society."⁹⁴⁶ This indicates the importance of railwaymen's wives to ASLEF and the encouragement they were given to join the Women's Society and the wider trade union 'railway family'. However, there were sources of tension between the ASLEF branch and the Women's Society. For example, when the Women's Society wrote suggesting a joint meeting to be held, the ASLEF branch replied that, "as so few of the Women's Society's member's husbands attend their own branch meetings we consider that no good purpose could be served by holding such joint meeting."⁹⁴⁷ This demonstrates that although the Women's

⁹⁴⁵ ASLEF branch records, 28/02/1926, D3033/1/2

⁹⁴⁶ ASLEF branch records, 09/06/1929, D3033/1/2

⁹⁴⁷ ASLEF branch records, 16/01/1938, D3033/1/2

Society was useful to the ASLEF branch for organising social events and fundraising for railwaymen's causes, if they were not able to persuade their husbands to join ASLEF then they served very little purpose to the union.

The ASLEF Women's Society played a more supporting role, fundraising for the union and supporting the social events that the ASLEF branch in Gloucester wished to organise. Unlike the Railway Women's Guild, they did not take part in any overt political campaigning but did support the local community through charity fundraising appeals, such as the Royal Infirmary Carnival. However, being part of the ASLEF Women's Society also provided avenues for the development of a specific female identity associated with the auxiliary despite the fact that they appear to be primarily concerned with socialising and fundraising.

6.5 Conclusion

This case study has demonstrated how the idea of the 'railway family' worked in practice in Gloucester, a fairly typical city in the first half of the twentieth century. Gloucester had a growing population, but not one that was expanding rapidly; it had a diverse economy with employment in factories, in the railway industry and on the docks; and it was politically stable, electing a majority of Conservative candidates for Parliament and the local council. Whilst not a 'railway town', a large number of Gloucester men and women were employed by the Great Western and the Midland/LMS railway companies. Many of these workers were also unionised into either the NUR, ASLEF or the RCA. This ensures that Gloucester as a case study provides representative examples of how the idea of the 'railway family' was deployed by

railway companies and trade unions across the country, with reference to railwaymen and women and their non-working family members.

One of the most successful ways the idea of the 'railway family' was utilised in Gloucester was by the trade unions and their women's trade union auxiliaries, the Railway Women's Guild and the ASLEF Women's Society. These auxiliaries fostered a bond of loyalty to the trade union and drew non-working women into the trade union idea of the 'railway family'. However, membership of an auxiliary also encouraged these women to support each other and the wider 'railway family' with initiatives and campaigns such as the Widows Fund and strike relief during industrial unrest. The local community benefitted from the trade union auxiliaries in Gloucester, especially local mothers with small children who were afforded extra provisions thanks to the Railway Women's Guild campaigning on maternal and infant welfare.

The two railway companies in Gloucester provided a large amount of industrial welfare for the 'railway family' that benefitted them socially, educationally and recreationally. This helped the companies foster a loyal workforce, although the case study of Gloucester proves that these were not a requisite - the Midland Railway Company did not provide as many opportunities for their workers as the GWR or LMS and did not face significant disloyalty from their workforce. However, it is important to note that the LMS was an amalgamation of a number of smaller companies and industrial welfare practices helped to unite this diverse workforce who had previously been under the paternal practices of other railway companies.

The idea of the 'railway family' extended out into the community in Gloucester, as can be demonstrated by the creation of an occupational community that supported one another, encouraged one another to join trade unions and provided lodging where

necessary. Railwaymen clustered in one particular area of Gloucester, with new railwaymen moving into this area year on year despite the provision of new housing in other areas of the city. This demonstrates that the idea of the 'railway family' was not just a trade union or railway company construct that was grudgingly accepted by those who worked on the railways or who were members of the trade union but was wholeheartedly accepted and internalised by railwaymen and their families. The principals of the idea of the 'railway family' were then utilised with others who were involved on the railway industry to create a strong occupational community of railway workers and their families within Gloucester.

Chapter 7. CONCLUSION

The 'railway family' is not a new concept – railwaymen and women have been proudly stating their railway lineage for almost two hundred years. However, this thesis has, for the first time, used the idea of the 'railway family' as a way to understand the techniques railway companies, trade unions and railwaymen used to build an 'imagined community'. The idea of the 'railway family' is especially important in exploring how women and children who were only connected to the industry by their family members, usually male breadwinners, were drawn into this railway community. The 'railway family' was successfully and effectively utilised by railway companies, trade unions and railway workers and their family members in order to create a community of loyal and invested railwaymen and their non-working wives and children. It is clear that the 'railway family' meant different things to the different groups involved.

At their core, railway companies utilised the idea of the 'railway family' to create and shape a community of loyal workers who realised that their own welfare was bound up with that of the company. Over time, paternalistic practices were replaced with industrial welfare schemes, emphasising the idea of self-help with the support of railway companies. It is clear from the case study of Gloucester that these welfare schemes and societies, such as the GWR Social and Educational Union and the LMS sports and social sections, were a key feature of company life from the early 1920s and they focused on ensuring that railway workers and their families were happy, healthy and well-educated. Paternalism, and later the introduction of industrial welfare,

contributed to the idea of the 'railway family' from the companies' perspective because it emphasised the all-embracing nature of the railway companies and the rights and responsibilities they had towards their employees and vice versa. In return for these educational, social and welfare schemes, railway workers and their families were expected to be loyal and hard-working. The evidence from Gloucester suggests that the railway companies were successful in their aims despite the fact that many railwaymen in Gloucester were also trade unionists – their loyalty was effectively divided between company and union. The definition of the 'railway family' from the companies' perspective was bound up in their changing definitions of welfare and paternalism – when these altered, the idea of the 'railway family' and the way it was deployed and developed.

Railway companies included non-working women and children by providing them with separate pages within the magazines that addressed them as wives, mothers and future employees. These pages, as discussed in Chapter 3, typically did not challenge traditional notions that a woman's correct and 'natural' place was in the home as a wife and mother. They were clearly utilising the idea of 'separate spheres' in order to ensure that the women whom they were inviting into the 'railway family' were clear in the knowledge of the boundaries of their influence and their acceptance. The pages aped other women's magazines by providing recipes, household hints and tips and childcare advice. Only the LNWR women's page, 'Tea Table Topics' deviated from this format by discussing the enfranchisement of women and women workers far before women entered the workforce in significant numbers or were assured of the vote. The Editor justified this by utilising the arguments of 'separate spheres' and the

discourse of associated feminist and political organisations who were pressing these issues into the public sphere.

During the First World War these pages also included working women, drawing them into the idea of the 'railway family' and assigning to them a status that was similar to that of wives and children in the eyes of railway companies. Due to the temporary nature of their work, female workers could not greatly influence decision-making within the railway industry, however they could disrupt the status quo that railway companies had established with their idea of the 'railway family'. Therefore, it was important that women workers, just like the wives and mothers of railwaymen, were drawn into the idea of the 'railway family' and were encouraged to be loyal to the railway company. By allowing debates about working women to appear within their magazines, the railway companies were effective in containing opposition and preventing it from affecting day-to-day working in their offices, workshops and stations. Outside of wartime, working women were side-lined from much of the content within the women's pages and the company magazines in general.

The railway company magazines developed over the period into more polished, corporate entities adjusting to the needs of the company and to railway employees. Their primary aim continued to be as a source of information about company practices, policies and innovations. Railway workers also featured more prominently in company magazines, not just in features on their social gatherings and marriages and deaths but also discussing their hobbies, home lives and heroic deeds. Educating railwaymen and their family members about each other's achievements and the willing support of the railway companies in all their endeavours became a key priority; this education revolved around the best interests of the company and included answering technical

questions, recommended book reviews and features on Esperanto, gardening and cookery. It is evident that the railway company magazines were very concerned with ensuring the moral and physical wellbeing of the 'railway family', as well as fulfilling their intended informative and educational needs. Although the ways that the idea of the 'railway family' was deployed by railway companies changed over time, the overall tone of the company magazines was homogenous and was broadly similar across all the different railway companies.

Trade unions approached the idea of the 'railway family' from a different perspective, often influenced by the political and feminist organisations that they were associated with such as the Labour Party and the Women's Labour League. All three trade unions utilised the idea of the 'railway family' primarily in relation to adult women. Their two-fold approach focused on protecting their male members from female workers and creating separate spaces where female non-members could support the union in a variety of non-threatening ways including moral support, fundraising and political activities. By ensuring that women remained, for the most part, separate to the main body of union members, trade unions were attempting to ensure that their male members continued to have a more privileged and inviolable position in terms of wages, working conditions and the ability to negotiate with railway companies. The only union that integrated women into their main membership was the RCA, who were forced to do this because of the number of female clerks who were introduced into the industry from the early 1900s onwards. However, the RCA did employ similar tactics to the two other railway unions with regard to their female members; despite campaigning for equal pay for female clerks, they accepted reduced pay scales for them in the settlement negotiations of 1920 and facilitated female-only

conferences, day schools and social and sporting activities. Whilst this was not unusual during this period (the Labour Party for example had separate women's sections and a women's conference each year) it did signify to female clerks that they were considered by the union to be temporary, less important than male clerks and not such a central part of the 'railway family'. It was in this way that the idea of the 'railway family' was being used as an exclusionary force in order to keep women workers separate from the main body of male trade union members.

During both the First and Second World Wars, female workers were grudgingly accepted into the trade union idea of the 'railway family' in order that they were less of a threat to the male trade union members who they had to work alongside, though only after the railway companies, the trade unions (except the RCA) and the Government had agreed that women in traditionally male roles would be removed at the end of the war. The concern that men would lose their status as breadwinners to women was another factor in their fear of women in the workplace. Their concern was documented in the letters and articles that appeared in the trade union newspapers, particularly with reference to the higher grades of railway employment. By admitting women into the NUR and RCA a bond was created between railway workers within the 'railway family' – the trade unions felt that if a female railway worker felt a bond between herself and her male colleagues, she was more likely to stand aside to allow for the re-employment of railwaymen who had served in the Forces and less likely to threaten their pay and conditions with her continued employment after the war. There is little information in the railway company magazines and trade union newspapers as to how the women employed on the railways actually felt about this situation. However, the fact that many of them did stand aside immediately at the end of the Wars

(primarily in the more manual jobs) indicates that they recognised that their labour was a temporary, but necessary, phenomenon.

The trade union auxiliaries provided separate spaces for the wives, mothers and daughters of trade union railwaymen. As well as creating a social environment for women with similar needs and priorities to meet, these auxiliaries provided a way that women could create their own identities as wives, mothers, political campaigners and as part of the 'railway family'. In some ways, this was an unexpected element for the trade unions, whose primary concern was that women supported their husbands in their trade union aims. Raising funds to support other members of the 'railway family' was a key priority of the auxiliaries for both the trade unions and the women who were members. This emphasised the bonds that grew up particularly between members of the auxiliaries because of the idea of the 'railway family'. Education on trade union and political matters was an important function of the auxiliaries and created more knowledgeable citizens and trade union supporters. For some branches, this led their members to campaign on a number of issues that affected women and the 'railway family' including maternal and infant welfare, old age pensions and the control of food prices. Their activism was primarily welcomed by the trade unions, who recognised that women were an important force to be mobilised. However, there is evidence that some of the more controversial campaigns were shielded from the gaze of male branch members; the necessity of this is debateable as the NUR were vocal on a number of potentially contentious issues including greater access to birth control.

Despite the benefits this campaigning had for the 'railway family', there was also a strong insistence within the trade union newspapers that women needed to balance any auxiliary work with their roles as wives and mothers. Railway companies and trade

unions were effective in the ways that they drew women into the idea of the 'railway family', as can be seen in the case study of Gloucester, with women actively taking part in company and trade union events and demonstrating their loyalty to both the company and the union. However, it does appear that the trade unions and the railway companies overlooked the fact that women had their own minds and therefore could, and did, complain about their treatment by railway companies and trade unions. For trade unions, their auxiliaries also posed a particular problem because they wanted the independence to make decisions both financially and politically. By allowing their auxiliaries to choose their own programmes of fundraising, socialising and political campaigning, the trade unions were in fact engendering loyalty and support amongst the members of the female auxiliaries who were able to develop their own identities as wives, mothers and women. Ultimately, an intimate connection to the 'railway family' meant that these women knew that their family's economic survival was connected to the success of both the railway companies and trade unions and therefore they did not seek to challenge either institution too vigorously.

The Railway Queen was an important example of how the greater co-operation between railway companies and trade unions was in evidence from the mid-1920s. One reason for this was that the Railway Queen was able to unite companies, unions, railwaymen and their families under the banner of the 'railway family'. She was a representative of railwaymen, drawn from their community, and participated in drawing attention to the welfare schemes that were crucial to ensuring that the 'railway family' was cared for in the event of illness, accident, old age or death. The office of the Railway Queen acted as a further 'separate sphere' through which women

were encouraged to support the 'railway family', albeit one that was controlled by the male-dominated railway companies and trade unions.

The language of the 'railway family' was crucial in creating both an inclusive and an exclusive community. The language used within railway company magazines and trade union newspapers sought to foster the loyalty of railwaymen to their company or to their class. In itself, this was not unusual; the language of 'brotherhood' was a common feature of trade union life. The idea of the railway industry as a family also created a space for women and children to be included within the social and welfare structures that both railway companies and trade unions provided. However, this language was also an exclusionary force creating barriers to participation in the occupational community for those who did not work in the railway industry.

From the trade union perspective, language was crucial in creating separate spaces for women as both members of the union and as members of the auxiliaries. The position of women workers was more complex; during wartime, when they were required to replace railwaymen in order to keep the railways running, women workers were welcomed into the 'railway family' and the language that surrounded the 'railway family' reflects this. Outside of wartime, there was a more ambivalent attitude to women workers. The railway companies continued to employ them in certain roles and therefore were more likely to use their magazines to include women workers in the 'railway family'. Trade unions however viewed female railway workers as a threat throughout the period and outside of war time the language of the 'railway family' reflected this desire to exclude women workers from full and active participation in the 'railway family'. Instead, home-making wives were upheld as the ideal role for women, and the most important element of their participation in the 'railway family'.

The language of the 'railway family' was utilised by both the railway companies and trade unions to emphasise their perceived view on the appropriate roles for non-working women. Ultimately, outside the exceptional circumstances of wartime, this was as wives, mothers and supporters of railwaymen. The content of the women's pages in both railway company magazines and trade union newspapers highlighted this desire, as did the emphasis on the male breadwinner model.

Benedict Anderson's work on 'imagined communities' has influenced much of the basis for this work. The 'railway family' was an 'imagined community' that stretched the length and breadth of Britain and across the globe. In Chapter 2 it was stated that this thesis would examine Anderson's hypothesis that 'imagined communities' were created in response to potential exclusion from more popular 'imagined communities'. Railway companies drew more heavily on the idea of the 'railway family' when they were strongly challenged by trade unions. This occurred from 1911 onwards and it is interesting to note that the inclusion of many of the railway company magazine women's pages occurred during this period. The challenge from trade unions also forced the railway companies to alter their paternalistic approach to encompass more of the self-help strategies that trade unions advocated during the inter-war period. This included schemes such as industrial welfare, which drew more railwaymen and their family members into the idea of the 'railway family' but also acted to ease tensions between railway companies and trade unions by emphasising self-help.

Paternalism was the foundation of railway company management and by challenging it with their own version of the 'railway family', the unions were instantly putting themselves in direct competition with the railway companies and thus

challenging their 'imagined community'. The fact that the companies refused to recognise and negotiate with the trade unions exacerbated the issue. During the two World Wars and the inter-war period, the economic situation of the country as a whole forced both the railway companies and trade unions to come to a greater understanding in order to protect their businesses, workers and members.

The railway industry conforms to Anderson's ideas on 'imagined communities' in relation to their creation, their growth, particularly through print media, and the fact that they were both inclusive and exclusive. However, the 'railway family' counters Anderson's rather negative portrayal of the 'imagined' nature of these communities as it was lived and experienced in day-to-day life by railwaymen and their non-working family members. The case study of Gloucester has demonstrated that the idea of being part of the 'railway family' created affective bonds between railwaymen, between their wives and amongst the occupational community in general. An occupational community of railway workers grew up in a particular area of Gloucester that was fostered by membership of trade unions and trade union auxiliaries, close residence and lodging, and the knowledge that being a part of the railway industry was a bond that was created not necessarily by blood but by the industry itself.

What is clear is that belonging to the 'railway family' was a positive experience, and for many railway workers and their families the concept provided a support structure that brought moral and financial benefits during times of hardship. It also created a bond between members of the same community through a shared sense of values and priorities. It was on this basis that an occupational railway community was created and, as the case study of Gloucester demonstrated, this community was functional and valuable for those within it and for others in the local community. This

thesis has highlighted the importance of kinship and community for railway workers – the emphasis that railway companies and trade unions placed on the ‘railway family’ was a reflection of this. By permeating streets, houses and relationships of all kinds, the idea of the ‘railway family’ went beyond the literal workplace. Being part of the ‘railway family’ fed into an individual’s identity and being part of the industry through employment, trade union or auxiliary membership or via family members remained important for many men and women through to retirement and up to the present day.

7.1 Further research

The idea of the ‘railway family’ and the ways that it was constructed and utilised can be applied to other historical periods and industries. In relation to the railway industry the idea of the ‘railway family’ could be explored in the post-Nationalisation period, from 1948 onwards, in order to understand how British Railways (later British Rail) united their diverse workforce that spanned the whole of the British Isles. Reprivatisation, which began in 1994 and was completed in 1997, would also provide a modern-day case study of the ‘railway family’ and a consideration of the techniques that earlier railway companies used to create a sense of loyalty and community amongst their employees. Is it possible to apply the idea of the ‘railway family’ in a modern context?

As discussed in Chapter 2, a comparative study of how the ‘railway family’ was viewed within the railway press and the daily popular press was outside the scope and limits of this thesis; however, this would be a valuable study in order to consider how the ‘railway family’ was represented outside the industry and whether the idea, which was so strong within railway circles, permeated outside the railway industry. Further

work on how the railway companies and trade unions acted as agents of social control, for example through socialisation in the schools they provided or amongst the congregations in the Churches and Chapels they sponsored, would enhance ideas about the influence that railway companies and trade unions exerted on railwaymen and their families both inside and outside the workplace.

The mining industry would also provide a fruitful comparison for the ways that women and children were drawn into a highly unionised, predominantly male industry. Further research would illuminate whether the strong community ethos that has been identified in mining communities in twentieth century Britain was translated into a community in which women and children were welcomed and provided with their own spaces to express how their experience of the mining industry affected their outlook. Other trade unions, political parties and feminist organisations could be studied in Britain and further afield, utilising some of the techniques of this thesis, in order to come to a greater understanding of the agency that women were able to exert over the issues that affected them at work, at home and in their day-to-day lives within these organisations. However, it is clear from this thesis that there were certain ideas applied within the railway industry in terms of 'family' and community which could resonate amongst many groups in British society during the first half of the twentieth century and beyond.

7.1.1 Suggestions for the National Railway Museum

One of the key justifications for this thesis is the reinterpretation of the National Railway Museum's collection with regard to the 'railway family'. This thesis is successful in demonstrating how important the idea of the 'railway family' was to

railway companies, trade unions, railwaymen and their families and how integral it should be to any interpretation that focuses on the railway industry as a whole. Yet there is still a great deal of work that could be undertaken with regard to further research on the idea of the 'railway family' in other periods that would be of benefit to the NRM and the display of collections that relate to the 'railway family', including post-Nationalisation and the present-day connotations of the 'railway family'. Practically, there are also a number of suggestions that relate to the collection held at the NRM which could be developed to reflect the research in this thesis and the idea of the 'railway family':

- As the NRM inherited its core collection from the railway companies, the collection is dominated by stories told from their perspective.⁹⁴⁸ A collecting policy that focuses on adding objects and archive material that reflect the experience of the 'railway family' in trade unions and their auxiliaries, leisure time amongst the 'railway family' and the relationship between railway companies and their employees regarding paternalistic practices and industrial welfare would enhance the existing collection.
- Stories told in the current museum displays about women and the railway industry focus heavily on their role as workers during the two World Wars. It is clear from this thesis that there were a number of other avenues that allowed for the participation of women within the railway industry and further interpretation is necessary to highlight these to diverse audiences. The role of women, as workers, wives and trade union

⁹⁴⁸ National Railway Museum, 'History of the Museum' (2017)
<http://www.nrm.org.uk/aboutus/history> [26/7/2017]

supporters, has been reimagined in this thesis to highlight the more active and decisive role that women were able to play but which has been side-lined for too long.

- A number of the trade union archives are held at the Modern Records Centre at the University of Warwick and closer collaboration between the NRM and the Modern Records Centre would enhance the existing archive at the NRM. Welfare institutions that were able to care for the 'railway family', such as orphanages, residential care homes and convalescent homes, can be augmented through collaboration with the local archives that hold further collections.⁹⁴⁹ The idea of the 'railway family' in theory and in practice permeated the whole of the railway industry and influenced decision making within railway companies and trade unions, therefore it is appropriate that researchers at the NRM are able to access and interpret the stories told by both sides of the industry.

It is clear from research undertaken for this thesis that the 'railway family' is an important tool through which it is possible to understand the strong, affective bonds that grew up between railway workers and their family members and how this occupational community was channelled by railway companies and trade unions to derive loyalty and support in return for increased welfare, education and the involvement of non-working women and children within a male-dominated industry.

⁹⁴⁹ For example, the NRM holds a small archive collection for both the Southern Railway Servant's Orphanage, Woking and St Christopher's Railway Home, Derby which have both been catalogued as part of this thesis. Collaboration would prevent duplication and allow ease of access for researchers.

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