Charitable Activity

Charitable work was the first public voluntary activity to engage Tasmanian women, with individual charity recorded from the 1810s and societies beginning the next decade. The government offered little support for the unfortunate and it had long been accepted that women in particular assist others, both from motives of Christian charity and from humanitarian sympathy for neighbours. In Tasmania there were large numbers needing assistance; the results of the convict system, Aborigines, immigrants, for example. Not all received much assistance, but there was certainly scope for charitable women.

Needy children were the first objects of organised charity for women in Tasmania. They were obvious objects of compassion: helpless, often attractive, appealing to women's maternal instinct (or, if this were not the case, such were society's expectations that women were reluctant to admit it). Moreover, needy children were perceived as potential criminals, taking to theft or prostitution to survive, so timely help could make them into respectable citizens. On emotional, humanitarian and pragmatic grounds, therefore, children occupied a large part of women's charitable effort from the start.

The first women's charitable organisation was established in 1828, a Ladies' Committee to visit girls at the government orphanage. Certainly in that year its activity was ineffective, but in 1837 it was reported that men's and ladies' [sic] committees had run the schools for some years, despite difficulties; a superintendent was then appointed and the committees were apparently disbanded. This institution, training neglected girls for domestic service, was typical of most efforts to assist children. At first many failed, from competition, sectarian rivalry, and probably inexperience by the organisers; the first successful venture was the Ragged Schools, possibly because they were more sympathetically run and received a better response from the poor, and were on a firmer financial basis.

Typical of such schools was a girls' industrial school, established in Hobart first as a female refuge. The committee found prostitutes difficult to manage and in 1863 the institution became a Girls' Industrial School for girls under sixteen who had not committed

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1 See Alison Alexander Governors' Ladies THRA, Hobart, 1987, p. 90
2 SWD 24, 5 June, 12 July 1828, p. 61; Hobart Town Courier 17 August 1832; Melville 1833 p. 246;
CSO 5/5/91 3 February 1837, 5/60/1387 15 May 1837. The committee may have existed until the 1860s, as Walch's Almanac mentions such a committee (Walch's Almanac 1864 p. 104)
crimes. The school thus dealt with younger, more malleable girls, so society was rid of possible prostitutes, the girls became self-respecting and self-supporting and the middle class

Charitable Schools in Tasmania until 1860

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Run by</th>
<th>Religion</th>
<th>Cttee</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant Schools (2)</td>
<td>1832-1850</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>undenom</td>
<td>men</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dorcas Society school</td>
<td>1836-1840</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>undenom</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>1845-1850</td>
<td>Ltn</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>Anglican</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Ltn Christian Union School of Industry</td>
<td>1846-1850</td>
<td>Ltn</td>
<td>women</td>
<td>non-con</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ragged Schools (3)</td>
<td>1853-1905</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>men</td>
<td>undenom</td>
<td>3*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Each Ragged School had a separate Ladies' Committee
non-con = non-conformist; undenom = undenominational; Ltn = Launceston

Sources: see Reference notes

was provided with trained servants: in nineteenth century Tasmania and indeed in most British countries the only method the middle class envisaged of assisting 'unfortunate' girls was to remove them from their homes, which had failed, give them basic education, train them as servants and find them positions. Domestic service offered by far the most job opportunities; it was usually the only training the institutions knew how to offer; and it prepared girls not only for economic independence but also for marriage. It also assisted the institutions' funds (girls did outside washing as part of their training) and provided the middle class with trained servants.

Though the school had a paid staff it was managed by the Ladies' Committee, which met once a month, inquired minutely into the running of the school, visited it regularly,

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1 UTA G 3/1/1 October, December 1863, March 1864, March 1866, and minutes of committee meetings 1863-1914, G3/1/1-5; G3/6; CSD 4/79/258, 4/45/646
2 Hobart Town Courier 8 June 1832, 2 May 1837, 6 March 1840, Annual Reports of the Infant School Society (Tasmaniana Library) (Infant Schools); UTA RS 1/2 (1) August, September, October, December 1836, January, February, March, July, August 1837, January, February, April, October 1838, June 1839, May 1840 (Dorcas School); Woods Almanacs 1846-1850 e.g. 1850 p. 138 (Launceston schools); Mercury 23 April 1862; Walch's Almanac 1863 p. 121, 1880 p. 189; Tasmanian Daily News 21 October 1856; CSD 7/25/165; M. Sprod 'Down Wapping' Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1988, pp. 94, 95 (Ragged Schools)
collected money for it, sent it presents of fresh fruit and vegetables from members' gardens, and occasionally had the girls to tea or took them on an outing. The committee consisted of twenty Protestant women. There were 'elections' for membership but no election was ever contested. On the whole the committee functioned stably and smoothly. Most members were effective, attending meetings regularly, and there seemed no difficulty in finding members. From 1862 to 1914, 113 women served on the committee, 14 for very short periods but 32 for over ten years. Many members' daughters joined the committee. The presidents included a doctor's wife but were mostly wives of Anglican clergy. Members' husbands mainly worked as clergy, doctors and other professional men, government employees, merchants and businessmen. There seemed little change in the composition of the committee from 1862 to 1914: members were middle-class wives, 'ladies', predominantly Anglican but with a number of non-conformists (in contrast to Launceston's earlier two committees). The upper class element, always small, did fade. The governor's wife was always asked to be patroness; indeed, Mrs Gore-Browne was reported to have encouraged the school's formation and was active on the committee. Succeeding governors' wives were moderately active until the 1880s but from then on did little, as did Anglican bishops' wives. Possibly due to a lack of domination by these upper class ladies, possibly as a response by these conservative women to the increasing recognition of women's rights and the expansion of women's public role, from 1900 there is a more self-confident tone about the committee. They changed their title to 'Committee of Management' instead of the less forceful 'Ladies' Committee', rules were rewritten and deputations sent to the premier asking for more inmates to be sent to the school.

Members of the committee often worked hard, and were aware of this: there is at times a self-congratulatory air about the minutes. Though many members were kind they remained middle-class benefactors dispensing kindness to the working class: theirs was the 'pleasurable duty in watching over the well-being of the girls entrusted to their charge'. They were convinced they were doing right and doing it the right way: the children's natural homes had proved inadequate and the school's system was 'naturally infinitely better' than the boarding-out system, 'as the entire time and thought of skilled persons is devoted to the

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1 UTA G 3/1/1 November 1865, February 1883 G 3/1/2 June 1895, February 1889, December 1907
2 UTA G 3/1/1 June 1863; G 3/1/2 August 1893, March 1904, for example
3 For example, UTA G 3/1/2 January 1904
4 *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* vol 1, p. 220
5 UTA G3/1/4 March 1905, March 1906
6 For example, Mrs Salier made the younger girls 'cosy red hoods': UTA G 3/1/2 July 1904
7 *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1884 paper 18
work'. Most committee members were prepared to put time and effort into the school. In return they received the satisfaction of doing worthwhile work and the sense of fulfilment this gave, the pleasure and interest of social contacts at meetings, and a supply of trained servants, though the benefit of this is debatable, as at sixteen many girls needed more training and some members at least looked on providing this as extra work, part of the work of being on the committee.

A Free and Industrial School was opened in Launceston in 1862 and lasted about four years. In 1877 a group of men and women established a school based on the Hobart institution. The women were inclined to let the men speak and the female president sent a deputation of three men to see the Colonial Secretary, 'as she considers they would be much better able to acquaint you as to the requirements of the proposed school'. The school ran successfully until after 1914. Annual Reports indicate the committee felt it was its 'bounden duty' to help the unfortunate children whom it tried to make 'really comfortable and happy'. In 1913, however, the committee refused to allow the girls a Christmas holiday for which a benefactor raised money, saying the girls were being brought up as servants and it was not good for them to have too much pleasure; an MHA criticised this, the Chief Secretary asked for an explanation, and the Daily Post strongly criticised the girls' deprivation of 'the ordinary pleasures of childhood' and the ladies' 'insolent superiority'. In 1914 the Post criticised the committee again: 'a committee which makes little girls, at their own breaking-up, act as waitresses, whilst the ladies themselves are waited upon, is really bringing children up as servants'. By 1914 the condescending attitude so long maintained by middle class ladies towards the objects of their charity was being questioned. A Catholic orphanage and industrial school was opened in Hobart in 1879, but it was run by nuns and there is no mention of assistance by volunteer women, though this doubtless occurred.

By the 1870s the orphanage and industrial schools assisted homeless children. Gradually other categories of children needing assistance were recognised and aided, and societies multiplied from the 1880s. From 1881-1905 the Ladies' Christian Association ran a reformatory to deal with girls charged with crimes, who would otherwise have gone to

1 Journals and Papers of Parliament 1897 paper 5
2 Interview with Dr Christine Walch, Summerhome, 24 May 1980
3 Walch's Almanac 1863 p. 137, 1865 p. 137
4 CSD 10/49/1019, printed leaflet about the school; G3/1/1 November, December 1876
5 CSD 10/49/1019
6 Journals and Papers of Parliament 1884 paper 18, 1886 paper 12, 1901 paper 27
7 Daily Post 25, 29 December 1913, 1 January 1914
8 Daily Post 1 January 1914
9 Annual Reports, Journals and Papers of Parliament 1880 paper 18, and 1881-1914
prison and were regarded as potential criminals and prostitutes; as usual they were trained as servants and the institution was similar to the Industrial School.\(^1\) Teenage boys were also assisted. From 1878 to about 1915 Gertrude Bromby, daughter of the Anglican bishop, and later Sarah Clarke, ran St David’s Night School, holding evening classes for men and boys over school age.\(^2\) About eighty men and boys attended and classes were taught by Clarke and voluntary women teachers. Clarke, a strong-minded and competent woman, gave the boys advice, found them jobs, assisted them in sickness and distress, visited them in hospital and at home and took a keen interest in their welfare. She also organised the Standfast Club, where boys participated in sports; a savings bank and a benefits club; a Homing Club; a Sunday School; singing classes and an annual picnic. From 1892 she taught full-time, as did some of her assistants, but she remained devoted to the Night School and was praised for her work there.\(^3\) A similar club to the Standfast Club, the Boys’ Anchor Club, was organised at the Cascades by the energetic Miss Butler.\(^4\)

From 1900 the method of assisting poor children began to change, as societies were established to provide the advantages, educational and recreational, of the middle class. The Steadfast and Anchor clubs were precursors; the Creche Association set up a creche in 1906;\(^5\) the Free Kindergarten Association, founded in 1910 by Emily Dobson, set up kindergartens in Hobart and Launceston to provide poor children with preschool education as well as food and clothes where necessary;\(^6\) the Sunshine Society of 1910 provided a Christmas treat.\(^7\) The Hobart Children’s Aid Society of 1911, however, continued the functions of the Ragged Schools.\(^8\) From the 1900s some women also began to try to assist children by Act of Parliament; when introducing the Infant Life Protection Bill in 1907 the premier stated that women’s organisations in the north and south had contended for it.\(^9\) Much work had been done by the Children’s Protection Society; and when the Act was passed the Launceston branch was assisted to open a children’s home (which existed until

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1 CSD 13/24/292, 10/78/2014, 22/90/168; Annual Reports, *Journals and Papers of Parliament* 1881-1905
2 UTA RS 7/137; *Tasmanian Mail* 19 November 1892, 25 November 1899, 23 November 1907
3 NS 638/83; *Tasmanian Mail* 28 December 1933, 8 November 1890, 19 November 1892, 25 November 1899, 23 November 1907; UTA W9/11/2(1), 11 September 1898; RS 7/137
4 *Clipper* 20 May 1899; *Tasmanian Mail* 13 September 1902; RS 7/137
5 *Tasmanian Mail* 14 October 1905, 7 July 1906, 2 March 1907
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 27 May, 4 June, 27 October 1910, 2 February, 14 December 1911; *Daily Post* 27 May 1910
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 29 December 1910, 14 December 1911
8 *Daily Post* 14 September 1911
9 *Mercury* 4 September 1907
1911) and in the south an extra District Nurse was funded. Mrs Frances Edwards was a staunch supporter of the Society, and tried to forward children's welfare by writing newspaper articles which effectively publicised various problems. In 1910 she published a series of articles such as 'the Cry of the Children', concerning child mortality. She also urged support for deserted wives, a system of visiting nurses and bush nurses, and complained of undue leniency when a man who assaulted a thirteen-year-old girl was given only a six-month gaol sentence. Educated and articulate, Frances Edwards was one of the few women to use the press to publicise her beliefs.

Another woman attempting unusual work was Mrs L.F.S. Hore, who in 1907 tried to start a branch of the Parents' National Educational Union, which encouraged education through exercising children's natural gifts. The governor's wife gave her support, but even this was not enough to make such an avant-garde idea appeal to Tasmanian parents.

Increasingly from the 1890s children's organisations were established for middle class children, to improve them by encouraging temperance, kindness, thrift, high-mindedness, practical skills, womanliness, or all of these. In 1899 it was reported that such organisations were so numerous that few (middle class) children did not belong to one and some belonged to three or four. Examples were the Bands of Hope and the Ministering Children's League, begun in 1892, which encouraged children to do one kind deed a day and raised money for convalescent homes. By 1911 there were 18 branches. Later societies included the Boys' Brigade (1910) and the Girl Guides (1912), while churches had numerous children's societies. All these organisations involved many women, as far as can be ascertained virtually always middle class, as organisers and assistants.

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1 Tasmanian Mail 6 October 1900, 21 July 1906, 21 December 1907, 22 February 1908, 18 May 1911; Daily Post 29 July 1910
2 Daily Post 24 February 1910, 22 April, 11 July, 21 October 1910
3 Daily Post 1 August, 25 June, 7 March, 15 November 1910, 8 August, 12 December 1913
4 Tasmanian Mail 20 July, 28 September 1907
5 Tasmanian Mail 4 March 1899
6 WR Barrett The History of the Church of England in Tasmania the Author, Hobart, 1942, p. 46; Church News April 1892; Tasmanian Mail 2 April, 24 December 1892, 17 September 1898, 9 November 1901, 13 February 1913; Mercury 13 February 1907; Walch's Almanac 1906 pp. 311, 325; NS 499/368
7 Tasmanian Mail 23 November 1911
8 Walch's Almanac 1910 p. 325 (Boys' Brigade); Daily Post 17 December, 25 June 1913 (GFS); Daily Post 22, 19 June, 25 May 1911, 28 December 1912 (Girl Guides)
After assisting children, women's charitable instincts usually turned to helping other women, for men were generally assisted by men's groups and were mostly assumed to be able to look after themselves in any case. Women needing assistance were divided into two categories: respectable and deserving, and unrespectable and undeserving.

Typical of most women's groups was the Hobart Town Maternal and Dorcas Society, founded in 1835 on the pattern of similar societies in England and Sydney. It assisted destitute married women during their confinements, extending relief to other poor as funds allowed. Hobart was divided into districts, each with a committee member as Lady Visitor, who visited cases and collected money from the public. A bag of clothing was lent to cases, with a Bible, oatmeal and soap. At first the society was often the only charitable group in Hobart, and its work extended to all needy cases. Here it aimed to rescue those who, though normally hard-working, had difficulties and needed short-term assistance to restore them to their former position. The society also gave small pensions to several elderly women. The Society itself said in 1903 that its work had changed little since its inception.

The Dorcas committee was determined to help only the deserving poor, and in 1905 its aim was the same as in 1835: 'not to pauperise the recipients' but to help 'remove monetary anxiety from hard-working mothers at the one critical time', and 'inculcate self-help, self-reliance, and the preservation of home-life'. Unmarried mothers were never officially assisted, though Ladies gave occasional private help. The committee was aware that it fought two evils, prostitution and drink: prostitution was seen as the deadlier. The committee realised that for a destitute woman prostitution could be the only way of earning a living, so destitute women were assisted until respectable support was forthcoming. In March 1847, for example, a woman was assisted because her husband's increased helplessness 'might only lead her to temptation'. Many women were not assisted or assisted less because they had 'bad characters' or were living with a man. One way of fighting prostitution was to keep families together, and women were sometimes assisted to rejoin absent husbands. If women left their husbands they were never assisted. Drink was

2 UTA RS 1/2(14)
3 Mercury 3 October 1905
4 For example, UTA RS 1/2(1) December 1836, 1/2(5) May 1851, 1/2(7) January 1866, 1/2(8) December 1872, 1/2(12) September 1912
5 UTA RS 1/2(2) March 1847
6 UTA RS 1/2(1) August, October, November 1845, 1/2(2) October 1847, 1/2(6) June 1857, 1/2(7), April 1866, May 1869
7 UTA RS 1/2(2) January, March 1848, 1/2(3) January, November 1849, 1/2(5) January 1855

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not seen as so indefensible, and drunkards were helped, though occasionally rather than regularly. If the husband drank, the wife was usually assisted. Poverty was frequently ascribed to drunkenness, but drunkenness was not apparently actively discouraged, and the minutes imply it was accepted as an ever-present evil.

The committee encouraged various virtues: religion (each maternity case was lent a Bible); cleanliness (if the woman returned the bag clean she was given clothing); family life; hard work ('hard-working' and 'respectable' were the most laudatory adjectives) and thrift, this last in a variety of ways, such as a Clothing Club in the 1840s and another scheme by which money subscribed earned rewards in 1860. The question always arose: would deserving cases who did not subscribe be assisted? They had to be, so the schemes failed, though the committee ascribed failure to 'the improvident habits of our poorer classes'. Several unsuccessful attempts were also made to get women to 'pay' for assistance by sewing.

Thrifty, hard-working cases were preferred by the committee, but there were many 'doubtful' cases. 'Not a good character', 'worthless but in distress'; what were the Ladies to do? Being on the whole sympathetic, they tended to feel that 'it is very hard to see a sick women in need of assistance' and most such cases received at least some help. Those who received none included unmarried mothers and women caught trying to impose; the committee knew some cases were 'worthless' - unmarried women posing as wives, undeserving people posing as deserving - but any caught were not helped again. If a woman returned the bag in a very dirty state, or pawned the contents, she was not helped again either.

The jobs of women's husbands were rarely stated, though most appear to have been labourers or small tradesmen. Some women supported themselves by doing needlework or laundry, charring, taking in lodgers, owning a small shop or fruit picking; these jobs did not always bring in a living wage. Women were sometimes assisted to earn a living by being helped to buy mangles, tubs or sewing machines, provided with sewing, or given mattresses.

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1 UTA RS 1/2(1) October 1846, 1/2(2) April, May, October 1847, January 1848, 1/2(5) August 1851, April 1852, 1/2(9) October 1891, 1/2(11) October 1905; RS 1/10 Annual Report 1860
2 UTA RS 1/10 Report 1850; TC P 362 MAT Annual Report 1849
3 UTA RS 1/2(6) October 1860, 1/2(1) June 1836, May 1844, 1/2(7) July 1862; TC P 362.54 MAT Annual Report 1844
4 UTA RS 1/2(1) October 1842, 1/2(7) May 1869, 1/2(8) September 1883, 1/2(11) November 1908
5 UTA RS 1/2(1) September 1837, August 1845, January, March 1846, 1/2(2) June 1848, 1/2(3) May 1850, 1/2(5) February 1851, 1/2(7) May 1865, February 1869, 1/2(9) May 1893; RS 1/1(1) 1848

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and blankets for lodgers.\textsuperscript{1} Returning women to independence was always an aim of the Ladies. Only once was an attempt made to provide employment for a husband.\textsuperscript{2}

The assumption was that a man earning a full-time wage could keep his wife and family adequately, if he did not drink (gambling was never mentioned). Only rarely were remarks made such as 'husband good only earning 2/- weekly', 'husband...in full work but the wife very destitute'.\textsuperscript{3} What happened when a woman or a couple did not return to self-sufficiency after receiving Dorcas help for a short period was never really faced, though some cases were on the society's books for periods of several years. There was never any criticism of the structure of the community, of wages paid, of the conditions of the poor; the Ladies, wives of those who prospered under the system, assumed that wages were adequate, that those who worked hard and did not suffer misfortune should be able to manage. In later years a redoubtable secretary, Laura Bright, did occasionally criticise the housing of the poor, though with no view to any action being taken, and even her remarks were usually something like 'poor case, husband a cripple, and how they manage to support themselves is a mystery'.\textsuperscript{4} Bright also showed anti-husband sentiment, and members seemed to assume that husbands, by drinking, improvidence or desertion, brought poverty on their wives. 'The extreme poverty in some of the houses is truly awful but in most cases there is a useless husband.'\textsuperscript{5} 'Mrs Loveless Baby still born is a good mother taken ill willow-stripping husband a human Beast!!!' wrote Bright, and once the society arranged police protection for an illused wife.\textsuperscript{6} One woman was helped whose husband left her, 'fortunately':\textsuperscript{7} many cases were deserted wives. Husbands were also ill, dead, unemployed, away looking for work, or in gaol. Generally husbands' failings were not taken to reflect on the wife, and the attitude to many husbands is summed up when Mrs Bennison 'very kindly' went to see an ill woman whose baby was dead. 'Husband not much good, sent him of [sic] to bury the little infant.'\textsuperscript{8}

\begin{enumerate}
\item UTA RS 1/2(10) June 1845, 1/2(2) October 1848, 1/2(6) November 1855, September, October 1857, February 1859, 1/2(8) November 1878
\item UTA RS 1/2(10) February 1901, 1/2(9) December 1892
\item UTA RS 1/2(9) December 1885, October 1890, 1/2 (11) January 1907
\item UTA RS 1/2(10) August 1902; TCP 362.54 MAT Annual Report 1905
\item UTA RS 1/2(10) October 1897
\item UTA RS 1/2(11) July, November 1907, May 1905, 1/2(7) September 1870, 1/2(8) December 1876
\item UTA RS 1/2(5) May 1851
\item UTA RS 1/2(11) May 1907
\end{enumerate}
The reaction of poor women to the society's aid is rarely mentioned. Some were grateful and some, assisted through a string of births, were fond of their Lady Visitors.\textsuperscript{1} Others were ungrateful, even rude and insolent.\textsuperscript{2} Worse, to the committee, were those who looked on the society's help as a right. Wherever possible applicants were shown 'that the aid of the Society is a bounty, not a right'.\textsuperscript{3} The society never tried to obtain government help for poor women, and did not request or probably even welcome the Maternity Bonus of 1912.

In its early days the society branched out into other areas. Material was sent to Flinders Island for Aboriginal women and from 1836-1840 the society ran a school for poor girls.\textsuperscript{4} The society had difficulties in the late 1830s and, like many charitable societies of the time, seemed after several years of activity to be dying out. Then there was an influx of new members, cases rose to 25 in 1842, and henceforward the society flourished. In 1843 an evening school for girls was proposed, but objections were raised as to the benefit of teaching the lower orders to write; the object of the society was to relieve the poor, not to instruct them.\textsuperscript{5} Various other charities came and went but at times the Dorcas Society worked alone and handled all general cases: in 1846, for example, 380 provision tickets were distributed and 48 women lent bags. Twelve years later, 39 women had bags and 578 grocery orders were given.\textsuperscript{6} In 1860 the Benevolent Society was re-established and the Dorcas Society reverted to caring for maternity cases. From 1864 onwards it assisted over 60 women a year, rising to a peak of 118 in 1896. Emigrants were assisted, with the Society proud of helping the poor and needy 'of whatever creed or country they may be'.\textsuperscript{7} It never seemed to enquire into cases' religious denomination and Catholics were assisted; the society co-operated with the Catholic Sisters of Charity.\textsuperscript{8}

The most difficult period for the Society was the 1890s Depression when many non-maternity cases needed assistance, and receipts were down. In 1895 pensions to the elderly could not be paid and the society appealed for help, pointing out that cases had risen from 60

\textsuperscript{1} UTS RS 1/2(1) May 1844, January 1847, 1/2(7) October 1864, 1/2(8) December 1878, 1/2 (10) February 1904, 1/2(11) September 1907 (grateful); 1/2(9) November 1891, 1/2(10) February 1902, February 1902 (fond)
\textsuperscript{2} UTA RS 1/2(2) March 1849, 1/2(6) December 1857, 1/2(9) February 1888, 1/2(10) December 1898
\textsuperscript{3} UTA RS 1/2(11) February, August 1906; TC P 362.54 MAT Annual Report 1886
\textsuperscript{4} UTA RS 1/2(1) 10, 24 August 1836, 1837-1840 passim
\textsuperscript{5} UTA RS 1/2(1) October, November, December 1843, January 1844
\textsuperscript{6} TCP 362.54 MAT Annual Reports 1847, 1859
\textsuperscript{7} UTA RS 1/2(1) March 1838, August 1844, 1/2(2) July 1848, 1/11 Report 1855
\textsuperscript{8} UTA RS 1/1(67); RS 1/2 (8) August 1876, November 1878, RS 1/2(9) December 1885
a year to nearly 200. Public response was good and by 1896 the society's funds were healthy once more, though from then onwards it helped only maternity cases.

A continual problem was midwives, whose ignorance and neglect was often noted. In 1908 the Queen Alexandra maternity hospital opened, with one free bed for Dorcas cases and trained nurses who attended Dorcas cases free. The committee was grateful, though it feared many patients 'prefer their Gamps'. In 1912 the society decided the Maternity Bonus made its work unnecessary, and from 1913 it met half-yearly, using its funds to assist special cases.

From 1835 to 1914, 187 women were members of the Dorcas committee. They were always referred to as 'ladies'; as far as can be ascertained the vast majority were wives of merchants and professional men, and the upper social echelons were poorly represented, though sought-after, with several eminent ladies asked to be nominal members. Only one prospective member, Miss May Dobson, was rejected; the committee decided that a young unmarried lady would hear things 'not fit for ears like yours', while 'the poor women themselves scarcely like speaking to a young lady as freely as they do to an old Matron'. Membership of the committee often ran in families; one family had five members from 1835 to 1914. Within the society there was a definite pecking order, and the Minutes record the presence of the eminent before that of lesser women such as clerks' and smaller merchants' wives. Although 26% of members were ineffectual, attending five meetings or fewer, another 26% remained on the committee for ten years or more and six members served for over 30 years. The society had a strong feeling of continuity and was proud of being the oldest charitable society in Tasmania. It joined the National Council of Women in 1900.

From the first a majority of the committee were Anglican. Non-conformists formed 40% of members in 1835, but this figure gradually declined to 7% in 1900 and by 1913 the society was almost completely Anglican with 40% of its members clergy wives. There was also a decline in support by social leaders. The governor's wife was always asked to be

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1 UTA RS 1/2(9) July, August 1895; *Tasmanian Mail* 20 July 1895
2 UTA RS 1/2(8) August 1871, 1/2(9) October 1891, April 1894, 1/2(10) November 1899, June 1900, 1/2(11) March 1906, 1/2(12) January 1910
3 UTA RS 1/2(11) April, June 1908
4 UTA RS 1/2(12) November 1912, December 1913
5 UTA RS 1/2 1835-1914 passim
6 UTA RS 1/1(78) 1898
7 Sarah Hopkins, her daughters Sarah Nisbet and Mary Ann Oakes, her daughters-in-law Martha Clarke and Mrs A. Hopkins; and see RS 1/2(1) November 1843, 1/2(5) November 1852, 1/2(9) September 1893, 1/2(10) February 1902
8 UTA RS 1/2(10) June 1900, October 1901, 1/2(11) August 1908

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patroness; Mrs Arthur and Lady Franklin were no more than nominal patronesses, but Lady Denison and Lady Young were active, attending meetings and making suggestions. Governors' wives of the 1860s and 1870s were moderately active and one claimed the society was the first to welcome her to Tasmania, showing the eagerness with which the society sought vice-regal patronage. From 1887, however, governors' wives were again only nominal patronesses. Similarly, Anna Maria Nixon was the energetic president of the society from 1843 to 1861 but later bishops' wives showed little interest.

In 1843 it was decided that 'to increase order at the monthly meetings' the office of president should be established. How Nixon was chosen was not recorded; the fiction of 'elections' was maintained but generally office bearers were proposed and accepted with no actual election. After Nixon came three wives of Anglican clergy as presidents, the first remaining in office for 42 years. The society was entirely run by women and the vast majority of subscribers were women (97% in 1844). Several members' husbands were members of Parliament, including one premier, but there is no evidence that these husbands acted to help the society. In 1901 Dr E. Crowther introduced an Act to register midwives; his wife was a committee member and he assisted the society, though he saw plenty of midwives in his professional work and was not necessarily influenced by the Society.

The committee kept up its numbers well, and in 1904 Laura Bright commented that it was as 'hearty and flourishing as since its young days'. The work did not appeal to everyone, however, and the society itself referred to 'the arduous work of visiting', and called collecting money 'by no means a pleasant work'. Many houses which the Ladies visited were dirty and smelly, with dreadful living conditions. Sometimes the Ladies were 'subject to annoyance' and people were rude, ungrateful or drunk. For years no collector could be found for Liverpool Street as the people there were so rough. Occasionally cases suffered from infectious disease. Many cases were distressing: Mrs Shoobridge visited 'the poor woman Hardwick whom she found with her four days old baby & two year old child locked in when her husband went to work to prevent the little child running out...the room was full of foul air and the poor woman very feverish'. The same Mrs Shoobridge 'very kindly' delivered the baby of a woman confined while fruit-picking. In many cases, with

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1 UTA RS 1/1(34)
2 Mrs Mercer refused to join the committee: RS 1/2(10) February 1903
3 UTA RS 1/2(1) November 1843
4 TC P 362.54 MAT Annual Report, 1844
5 UTA RS 1/2(10) January 1904
6 UTA RS 1/13 Annual Reports 1857, 1908
7 UTA RS 1/2(10) December 1898, August 1899, June 1903
8 UTA RS 1/2(10) February 1900
limited funds available, the Lady Visitors could do little to help, though sometimes they helped from their own pockets. They could be disturbed at all hours, and Laura Bright was once woken at 4 a.m. to provide a bag.¹

Committee members seem to have been motivated by genuine sympathy for the poor, which was sustained despite the difficulties and a lack of gratitude and co-operation, not to mention temperance and thrift, on the part of some poor. No moralising or force is ever mentioned, however. Perhaps the Minutes hid the condescension which must have been present to some degree in visits by Ladies to the poor, but they do give the impression of sympathy and practical support: 'Baby cold and covered with heavy blankets, Mrs Shoobridge persuaded the mother to take it in bed beside her.'¹² Such activity would certainly give the Lady a sense of being useful. Some women, like Harriet Salier, were genuinely fond of their cases, receiving affection in return, while others, like Emily Dobson, gained satisfaction from instructing the poor for their own good. Christian charity was another motive; many Ladies, especially clergymen's wives, felt it their duty to help the poor. For some, hobnobbing with governors' and bishops' wives was attractive, and certainly when these ladies attended meetings, numbers were at their peak. There was also an attempt by the committee to show the work as uplifting and holy; Annual Reports tell of 'the privilege to which we are called of being fellow-workers with [God] in relieving the helpless and the destitute, whom He has commended to us in His own stead'.³ In 1850 the committee wrote that it was a blessing to find a work of pure religion and service of love in which all could unite, and, in 1855, commented:

Well then may those whom Divine Providence has preserved from penury and distress be thankful for their mercies, and cheerfully combine in this Institution to aid he poor and needy around them.⁴

After a bereavement Lucy Hudspeth wrote, 'I trust soon to be able to resume life's work and in [aiding?] and helping others lighten a load of sorrow that without would be too much to bear'.⁵ So there were advantages in the sometimes difficult work: doing one's duty, going outside one's own troubles, doing something to atone for having more prosperity than others, working with God and finally earning a place in Heaven. Bright also depicts camaraderie at meetings; everyone is 'dear Mrs. So-and-so', and the ladies tut-tut together

¹ UTA RS 1/2(8) September 1883, 1/2(11) December 1908
² UTA RS 1/2(11) April 1909
³ TC P 362.54 MAT Report 1844
⁴ UTA RS 1/10 Annual Report 1850, 1/11 Annual Report 1855
⁵ UTA RS 1/1(55)
over sad cases, dirty homes and Human Beasts. In 1861 Lady Young praised the admirable harmony of the society.¹

The society managed financially, though economy was always necessary and financial crises struck occasionally. Subscriptions fell particularly in the 1900s, when there were more charitable societies vying for funds and it was difficult to recruit collectors. Interest from legacies was now substantial, however, and the society had no financial problems from 1899.

Most of the society's work took place in Hobart, extending to the suburbs when anyone there would take care of a bag. In 1903 a branch of the society was set up at Brighton, but it was soon in the embarrassing position of having collected more money than its few cases warranted, and in 1907 left the society and employed a district nurse instead.²

The Dorcas Society was typical of most women's charities; the many similarities between it and the Girls' Industrial School committee show them to have been probably typical of most women's charitable organisations. Dorcas Society ladies did not aim to change society, but to help the deserving poor function better within the existing system. Real sympathy for the poor, particularly the women, is seen, but the Ladies held the view that there was a specific reason for distress - drunkenness, illness, a useless husband, poor management - not that general conditions needed altering. In their view the system worked well and it was their duty to assist those who temporarily could not cope and who might otherwise be reduced to crime or prostitution. They had no desire to improve the position of the poor by, for example, education. Their position was very much that of the prosperous, deservedly blessed by Providence, voluntarily sharing some of their bounty with the unfortunates who, through lack of such virtues as thrift and sobriety, were not so fortunate; with such assistance being a gift, not a right, for the poor.

In the 1830s Hobart women cared for another group of women, female immigrants. This work was government-initiated and the task short-lived, as immigrants had only to be welcomed and housed until positions were found for them. For most this was easy, but some were badly-behaved and the Ladies' Committee had a difficult time 'watching over and admonishing them'. More immigrants arrived in 1834 and 1836.³ In 1850 more immigrants arrived and a ladies' committee was again organised, but its actual work is unknown.⁴

¹ UTA RS 1/1(30)
² Report of the Brighton Society included in Dorcas Society Reports, 1903-1906 (TC P 362.54 MAT); see also RS 1/2(13) September, October 1903
³ GO 33/11/792, 808 24 August 1832; GO 33/12/231; Hobart Town Courier 17, 24, 31 August, 7 September 1832
⁴ Standard of Tasmania 11 August 1851; GO 33/74/540 1 November 1851
A large group of women who received little charity was female convicts. The lack of interest was possibly because they were supposedly looked after by the government, or seen as undeserving, or too difficult to even try to improve, or possibly the enormous numbers daunted prospective assistants. Perhaps the respectable did not desire to run the risk of taint by association with convicts. Possibly, too, the fact that there was no comparable group in Britain meant there was no British organisation for Tasmanian women to emulate. Nevertheless, female convicts were present in large numbers and little was done. Elizabeth Fry sent a Miss Hayter to aid Lady Franklin form a society to assist them, but this collapsed. In 1843 two men established a similar society whose women members visited convicts, ‘endeavouring to discover the easy besetting sin...that I might give them suitable advice...little good appears to have been effected; their minds are still hardened’, wrote one visitor, Sarah Hopkins. The society lasted only a year. Lady Franklin visited the convicts occasionally, as did Lady Denison, but no further organisation to assist them was formed. For Hopkins, also a member of the Dorcas committee, it was clearly more rewarding to provide clothes and Bibles for the deserving poor that to advise criminals; for the recipients of charity, assistance at childbirth, a time when all women need help, was more acceptable than possibly impertinent and intrusive questioning and urgings to reform given by ‘good women’ to sinners.

More successful, possibly because recipients were treated slightly more as partners not inferiors, were efforts to assist servants who could have difficulty finding accommodation between jobs and were considered easy prey for the brothel-keeper. Mrs Sarah Crouch ran a servants' home for two years, then turned it over to a male executive committee and a female managing committee. The *Mercury* felt this was an excellent institution, fostering independence in the worker and sympathy between employer and worker, who combined to support it. As the Gore House Institute the home took in all working women; it closed in about 1871. A similar home operated in Launceston from 1861 to about 1867.

Launceston had seen prior charitable activity. A Dorcas Society was established in 1847 and ran for about four years; it was revived in 1874 and continued until approximately 1906. The Ladies’ Benevolent Society (1859-1863) helped aged and sick women. In Hobart poor but respectable women were assisted by the Women’s Friend Society (1875-)

1 Alison Alexander *Governors’ Ladies* THRA, Hobart, 1987, pp. 102-103
2 Rev. John West *The Hope of Life Eternal...* J.S.Waddell, Launceston, 1850, pp. 119-120, 123-124
3 Alexander pp. 103, 130
4 *Mercury* 23 April 1862; Walch’s Almanac 1863 p. 123, 1865 p. 122
5 Walch’s Almanac 1868 pp. 153-154; 1865 p. 137
6 *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* vol 2, p. 47; Walch’s Almanac 1863 p. 130
c.1881), which employed Bible women and a missionary, ran a Penny Bank and a Sewing Club, and held weekly meetings for women.¹

With the increase in the number of employed girls, associations were set up to assist them and keep them on virtuous paths. The Young Women's Christian Association was established in 1885. It had some difficulty keeping enthusiasm alive among its committee members; in 1897 it almost ceased to exist, but it revived and in 1900 opened a home for working girls. Games and music evenings, social evenings, lectures and classes in dressmaking, millinery, singing, physical culture, first aid and by 1910 pre-marriage knowledge were held; a club for factory girls was formed, as was a literary and debating club. The Association's aims were earnest and members were told it guarded not so much against the bad as the frivolous, such as young women attending the races. It wanted to instil something nobler and higher - earnestness, self-sacrifice and service for others. From 1888 there was also a branch of the YWCA in Launceston, though it did not run a home.²

Other institutions to assist working girls included the Young Women's Institute in Hobart (1891-1900) which provided lodgings for young working women of good character.³ The Launceston Women's Club, mentioned in 1897, aimed to provide recreation and improvement for working women, and the Happy Evenings Society of 1905 provided entertainment for women in factories.⁴ Both these groups were short-lived. There was some criticism of such activity by middle-class women, and the Clipper unsuccessfully urged working girls to form clubs themselves, without the aid of their 'betters'.⁵

Two other categories of women were assisted in the 1890s. The Beth Salem Home for Aged Ladies was formed in 1894 and ran till after 1914. Younger poverty-stricken ladies were assisted with needlework by the short-lived Ladies' Work Association of 1892. There were always more applicants than work and some were in great distress.⁶

So a large number of women worked for a variety of societies which assisted other, respectable women. The most successful were those with a definite, achievable aim, like the Dorcas Society, or those aimed, even obliquely, at preventing prostitution - servants' homes

¹ Walch's Almanac 1876 p. 157; 1878 p. 175; 1879 p. 182
² TC P 267.59946 YOU, Annual Reports 1885-1914; Clipper 17 February 1906; Tasmanian Mail 8 September 1900, 13 June 1908, 10 May, 4 October 1902; Daily Post 13 October 1911, 31 January 1910, 1 November 1912; Mercury 9 June 1905; Walch's Almanac 1889 p. 288, 1891 p. 284
³ Walch's Almanacs 1891 p. 284, 1898 p. 300; Tasmanian Mail 17 March 1900
⁴ Tasmanian Mail 4 December 1897, 19 August 1905
⁵ Clipper 26 September 1903
⁶ Tasmanian Mail 26 September 1891; Mercury 4 March 1904; Walch's Almanac 1905 p. 310; 1914 p. 336; Tasmanian Mail 13 August 1892

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and the YWCA. Possibly this high moral purpose, which seemed to inspire women workers, also explained the success of many societies which assisted girls.

A minor method of assisting other women which surfaced sporadically was conducting cooking schools. All attempts were short-lived and the continual complaint was of insufficient interest. Presumably this reflected a lack of interest in cooking or inability to pay for lectures, and implies that women felt little obligation to receive training in a traditional feminine area.

The activities described above assisted respectable, deserving women, and occupied by far the larger part of women's charitable work for other women. A small minority, however, attempted to assist unrespectable women, prostitutes, with such activity bringing two advantages; prostitution would disappear and the women be saved from a life of sin. Reforming prostitutes was attempted on a large scale in Britain, but was less popular in Tasmania, though many attempts to do so were made with ten short-lived societies established up to 1877. Generally the impetus came from a woman (three times from governors' wives), though almost all societies had male and female members and only one was entirely run by women. None was established by a church: all were set up by small societies formed solely for the purpose. Most were located in Hobart and most established a

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Existence</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Founder</th>
<th>Committee</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Society for the Suppression of Vice</td>
<td>c. 1845</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>GW Walker</td>
<td>few members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Van Diemen's Land Asylum</td>
<td>1848-1850</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Lady Denison</td>
<td>ladies' ctee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Penitents' Home</td>
<td>1855-9</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>5 ladies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hobart Town Female Refuge</td>
<td>1862-5</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>31 ladies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Refuge*</td>
<td>1862-5</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Lady G-Browne</td>
<td>31 Ladies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Home for Fallen Women</td>
<td>1869-71</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female Refuge, Risdon</td>
<td>1881-2</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Lady Lefroy</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Destitute &amp; Fallen Women Aid Socy</td>
<td>1884-7</td>
<td>Lton</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>8 ladies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Rhys' Home for Fallen Women</td>
<td>1884</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>Miss Rhys?</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Miss Sly's Home for Women</td>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Hobart</td>
<td>Miss Sly?</td>
<td>Unknown</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*The Female Refuge later became the long-lived Girls' Industrial School.

Source: see Reference notes

1 *Tasmanian Mail* 14 January 1893, 5 January 1895, 10, 24 November 1900, 16 February, 25 May, 3 August 1901, 17 December 1904, 7 January, 25 March, 8, 29 April 1905, 17, 20 August, 2 November 1907, 4 July, 8 August 1908

small home (the largest accommodating eight) to receive repenting prostitutes.

Why did all these societies fail? Some provided reasons themselves. Walker blamed his society's failure on want of pecuniary support and flagging zeal of other members.¹ The ladies of the Penitents' Home commented that many people thought it hopeless to try to rescue prostitutes.² The committee of the Destitute and Fallen Women's Aid Society blamed their 'almost insurmountable difficulties' on prostitutes themselves - their pride of dress, conceit, idleness and want of proper training.³ Reforming prostitutes was clearly difficult, as few wished to be reformed and made into servants; the lack of success of all these societies meant enthusiasm waned rapidly. The only society to continue was the committee of the Female Refuge of 1862-5; members admitted that working with prostitutes was difficult and changed their institution into an Industrial School, which accepted younger, as yet undefiled, girls.⁴

From 1887 five homes were established, all of which lasted a considerable period. The reasons appear to be that most were connected with churches and therefore had better resources of finance and personnel; full time professional staff or church personnel (Salvation Army officers or Catholic nuns) were employed; and there was a more kindly and less censorial attitude towards the inmates. As early as 1874 the Church News compared the old style of cheerless prison-type refuge with more homelike houses of mercy, ruled by love, whose inmates looked on the managers as friends and counsellors.⁵ In 1887 Grace Soltau, wife of a pastor, established the Rescue Home of Hope in Launceston.⁶ This was run by volunteers until 1892 when it was taken over by the Church of England. This church, its social conscience awakening, made a sustained effort to establish a refuge; it did

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¹ Backhouse and Tylor p. 521, Denison p. 83
² Tasmanian Church Chronicle May 1856
³ Examiner 12 October 1886
⁴ UTA G 3/1/1 November 1862, February, March 1864, April, August, December 1865, March 1866;
Cyclopedia of Tasmania vol 1, p. 220
⁵ Church News July 1874
⁶ Walch's Almanac 1889 p. 286; Church News July 1892
not 'dare' to remain inactive longer in the 'difficult work of seeking out all fallen women'. A
committee of ladies was established and the Home of Mercy was opened in 1890. By
October it was being run in conjunction with the Lock Hospital, the aim being to transfer
prostitutes from the hospital to the home and reform them.

A report of 1890 shows that the Home's organisers, paid and unpaid, were making a
great effort, the most enthusiastic being Maud Montgomery, the energetic wife of the bishop,
who 'repeatedly visited' girls in gaol or their 'evil haunts', subjecting them to 'all entreaties'
with 'the most strenuous efforts' made to reform them. The Church News commented that
the amount of visiting needed was 'enormous, and requires the assistance of many willing
hands and feet of both ladies and men'. To encourage them, they were informed that 'no
efforts in this direction are really lost'. The response appears to have been small, as some
months later Maud Montgomery, 'in a terse address', told of some of the Home's needs,
including visits. In 1893 she urged local ladies to visit the girls and spoke of the good done
by many ladies, 'who, overcoming their first shrinking, had found their work of helping to
guide their unhappy sisters well repay their efforts'. Another area local ladies shirked was
in taking the girls as servants, despite Montgomery's example in this. The Home
continued, though after Montgomery's departure the main work done by the paid staff and
the ladies' committee confined its work to fund-raising. A similar situation existed with the
Catholic Magdalen Home, 1893, established to receive and reform the 'unfortunate class',
and the Salvation Army Elim Maternity Home (1897); a short-lived Salvation Army home
was established in Launceston in 1896.

The other home established in this period was the undenominational Anchorage Refuge
Home (1893), run on traditional lines by a volunteer committee and a paid matron. It cared
for pregnant women and their subsequent babies for a year, then found them situations as
servants. It lasted until 1911 and is the only example of volunteer women running such an
institution successfully. The reason for its success is not clear, though it was probably
easier to achieve the home's limited aim of assisting pregnant women than the wider and far

1 Church News August, December 1889, September, October 1890
2 Church News September, October 1890, March 1891
3 Church News November 1891, August, November 1893
4 Church News August 1893
5 Annual Reports of the Home of Mercy (printed in the Church News); Tasmanian News 19 October 1895
6 Walch's Almanacs 1893-1914, entries under Roman Catholic Church: Convent of Good Shepherd Nuns (for
example 1894 p. 73); Salvation Army Souvenir Brochure Tasmanian Centennial Celebration 1883-1983 p.
15; Tasmanian Mail 27 June 1896
7 Church News June 1892; Mercury 16 September 1891, 11 June 1894; Tasmanian Mail 23 September
1899; Walch's Almanac 1905 p. 310, 1911 p. 329
more difficult task of 'seeking out all fallen women'. Over the entire period, the achievements of Tasmanian volunteer women in this latter field were meagre; outsiders generally began organisations which either failed, partly from lack of local support, or had to use professional staff, and Maud Montgomery's comments made it clear that though Tasmanian women were willing to work to prevent girls becoming prostitutes they would do little to rescue prostitutes.

As well as assisting women, from the 1880s women's societies helped a wide range of people: the Helping Hand Mission (1894) ran a Haven for Men, the Hobart Needlework Guild (1903) sewed for the poor, the Brabazon Society (1900) assisted the aged, the Blind Society (1887) the blind, the Catholic Ladies of Charity Society (1905) assisted the poor, the Blanket Loan Society ran from 1887. The Guild, Brabazon and Blind Societies at least were the preserve of upper class ladies but the mainstay of the Helping Hand Mission was Alice (Mrs Syd) Cummins, wife of the manager of a grocery and not in the same social class as the former women, indicating that charity was no longer the domain of the upper classes only. Some societies were established outside the cities, for example the Latrobe Helping Hand Society of 1910. Women also assisted animals; Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals existed from 1879 in Hobart and Launceston, though their activities were not recorded, and 1910 saw a branch of the Anti-Plumage League, which aimed to prevent extermination of birds by persuading women not to wear feathers.

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1 Daily Post 1 September 1900, 7 June 1902, 17 February 1910, 15 March 1912 (Helping Hand);
Tasmanian Mail 11 July 1903, 11 June 1904 (Needlework Guild); Tasmanian Mail 21 July 1900, 21 November 1903 (Brabazon Society); Cyclopedia of Tasmania vol 2, p. 48, Tasmanian Mail 1 September 1900 (Blind Society)

2 Walch's Almanac 1906 p. 307, Tasmanian Mail 22 July 1905, Examiner 4 June 1912 (Ladies of Charity);
Cyclopedia of Tasmania vol 2, p. 48, Tasmanian Mail 23 July 1904 (Blanket Loan)

3 Mrs Dobson ran the Brabazon Society, most members of the Guild were 'young society girls' (Tasmanian Mail 11 June 1904) and 'young ladies' and 'girls of the leisured class' worked for the Blind Society (Cyclopedia of Tasmania vol 2, p. 48, Tasmanian Mail 12 May 1900

4 Daily Post 10 May 1910, 16 May 1911; Post Office Directory 1910 p. 310. The grocery was the largest in Hobart and Syd Cummins later stood for parliament as a Nationalist candidate, but nevertheless Alice Cummins was hardly Emily Dobson's social equal

5 Tasmanian Mail 4 June 1910

6 Walch's Almanac 1880 p. 200, 1881-1914; Tasmanian Mail 23 October 1909, 5 March, 28 July 1910, 20 November 1903
For various reasons, some areas of charity did not see activity until the 1890s. Nursing was one, for although early charitable societies (for example, the Dorcas Society) provided assistance to the sick, this consisted more of dispensing food or money than actual nursing. Nursing as a profession did not exist and it was assumed the sick would be cared for by relatives. Once nursing gained public recognition and the advantages of nursing by trained personnel were apparent, however, providing skilled nursing for the poor became seen as a worthwhile charity.

The St John Ambulance Association was established in Launceston in 1887 and soon in other areas, for example Deloraine in 1890; both branches had female secretaries. From 1889 it held first aid classes in Hobart at the instigation of the governor's wife, Lady Hamilton. They were praised as enabling women to nurse their families and earn a livelihood; examinations were held and certificates granted. Lady Hamilton herself lectured on health and nursing to many groups and published lectures on these topics. In 1892 she formed a Nursing Band of eight to nine women to nurse the sick poor; by 1893 members had paid over 700 visits and nursed 80 cases, and each year received further lectures. The inevitable ladies' committee ran the Band. Typhoid kept it busy in 1894 but it found its resources insufficient to carry on its work and suggested employing District Nurses instead. There was some activity to this effect in 1893 but the District Nursing Association was formally established at a public meeting in 1896. It raised money for a trained nurse's salary and employed one in 1897, to nurse the poor in their homes. A branch was established in Launceston, run by a committee of men and women, but there was friction and the nurse was dismissed for proselytising patients. As a result the Evangelical Nursing Association was set up in 1896 with a nurse who was also expected to act as missionary. All three associations existed in 1914, with branches in Deloraine and Devonport. A similar scheme was Bush Nursing, set up by meetings of women, with three nurses working in

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1 Walch's Almanac 1889 p. 287; 1890 p. 294, 317
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 23, 30 May, 20 June, 29 August 1891
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 11 July, 22 August, 17 October 1891, 30 July, 15 October, 5 November 1892; series of lectures, *Tasmanian Mail* October, November 1891
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 18 June, 30 December 1893
5 *Tasmanian Mail* 5 August 1893, 18 August 1900, 17 July 1897; undated circular among Dorcas Society papers, RS 1/2(14)
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 17 July 1897
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 1, 22, 29 August 1896, 15 September 1900; *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* vol 2, p. 49; *Examiner* 10 June 1912
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 2, 14, 28 July 1910
country areas by 1913.\textsuperscript{1} Such organisations were more successful when volunteers raised money and did no actual work; they also show that the professional was now preferred to the amateur.

Ambitious fundraising was undertaken by groups which established hospitals. In 1897 in Launceston a committee of women, including a nurse, opened the Queen Victoria Hospital for women, one of the first such institutions established by Australian women. The committee managed it and in 1903 it was described as the most flourishing institution of its kind in Australia.\textsuperscript{2} A similar hospital in Hobart took some time to get underway; finally 'the men gave it up, and handed it over to the women', and, with encouragement from the governor's wife, the hospital was opened in 1908. The Ladies' Committee continued to run it successfully.\textsuperscript{3} Similar work was done by a committee of Hobart ladies who in 1892 opened a convalescent home for 'all overworked women needing a rest'. At first it was run by a volunteer, but from 1895 a matron was employed. Fees were low and money had to be raised constantly; the governor's wife was helpful.\textsuperscript{4} A convalescent home in Launceston was more closely connected with the General Hospital and had the advantage of a 'lady bountiful', Mrs Gibson, the well-known philanthropist, who dispensed 'unlimited charity'.\textsuperscript{5} Another hospital established by volunteers was the New Town Consumptives' Sanatorium of 1905. Emily Dobson was one of the founders and the first president. Trained staff were employed from the beginning.\textsuperscript{6}

Women assisted most hospitals; 'ladies' raised funds for St Mary's in the 1840s and from the 1890s most hospitals had ladies' committees which raised money.\textsuperscript{7} Women often

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1} TC P 610.7309946 HIS; \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 28 July, 22, 29 September, 6 October 1910, 13 June 1912, 16 January 1913
\item \textsuperscript{2} \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 9, 16 October 1897, 8 October 1898, 28 March 1903
\item \textsuperscript{3} \textit{Mercury} 31 January 1908; HSD 196/1, 197/1, 198/1, 218. The committee did not have a separate name and the home changed sites and names several times; it opened as the Ardilea Convalescent Home (\textit{Tasmanian Mail} 15 September 1894), then was situated in houses in Moonah (\textit{Mail} 16 March 1895), Derwent Park (\textit{Mail} 4 September 1897), and Risdon (\textit{Mail} 11 December 1897), when it became the Victoria Convalescent Home; the final move was to Beltana (\textit{Mail} 24 June 1899) where it remained until after 1914 (see annual entries in Walch's Almanacs)
\item \textsuperscript{4} \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 10 October 1891, 5 March, 17 September, 29 October 1892, 9 June 1894, 16 March, 11 December 1895, 27 March 1897, 3 September, 3 December 1898, 24 June 1899, 18 August 1910
\item \textsuperscript{5} \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 26 July 1902
\item \textsuperscript{6} \textit{Mercury} 7 June 1934; \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 16 June 1906, 8 December 1906
\item \textsuperscript{7} \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 10 April 1909 (Alexandra Hospital); \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 22 August 1903, \textit{Mercury} 29 February 1904 (Homoeopathic Hospital); \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 20 June 1908 (Launceston Children's Hospital); \textit{Mercury} 28 November 1892 (Hamilton Cottage Hospital)
\end{itemize}
enjoyed and excelled at fundraising, and committees which assisted nursing or hospitals by fundraising were generally successful, as long as they left the actual nursing to professionals.

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Until the 1890s there is little record of women assisting men, let alone unemployed men, who were generally viewed by the middle class as shiftless and undeserving, shirking honest work. In the depression of the 1890s, however, it became evident that there really was insufficient work and that unemployed men and their families were suffering considerable hardship through no fault of their own. Conditions were particularly difficult for them in winter, and in the winter of 1893 Emily Dobson and a committee of women ran a soup kitchen in Hobart for four months. By July they distributed two thousand penny dinners a week, not only assisting unemployed men but their families. There was a similar establishment in Launceston.¹ Winter would have been dull without politics and the soup kitchen, commented Alix of the Tasmanian Mail, unconsciously supporting the Clipper, which said the kitchen pauperised the spirit of the poor and provided ladies with haloes and praise.² Both bourgeois women and the Labor press were, therefore, wary of the 'pauperising' effect of philanthropy, and the ladies certainly saw their soup kitchen as a temporary expedient.

The committee then attempted to improve the housing of the poor. A badly-attended public meeting was held³ but such a radical scheme did not find favour and was quietly dropped. The next winter many women worked to assist the unemployed; such work (presumably sewing) was going on in almost every house, reported Alix.⁴ Emily Dobson, however, was interested in grander plans, and turned from housing to village settlement, a popular scheme overseas whereby the poor, by hard work and thrift, were given the opportunity to become independent farmers. Male and female committees were established in Hobart,⁵ but the less active men's committee was forced to request amalgamation with the

¹ Tasmanian Mail 10, 24 June, 22, 29 July, 19 August, 2, 30 September, 7, 21 October, 25 November 1893
³ Tasmanian Mail 2, 30 September 1893
⁴ Tasmanian Mail 2, 9 June 1894
⁵ Tasmanian News 12 October 1894; Taylor p. 39; and see P. Bolger, "The Southport Settlement" in THRA Papers and Proceedings vol 12, no 4, pp. 99-113

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women and the scheme was effectively run by Emily Dobson.1 There was criticism; that inexperienced settlers could not be expected to be thrifty and methodical and would starve, that other such settlements had failed.2

In 1894 land was chosen at Southport, 25 acres for 20 families, working co-operatively under a manager.3 Emily Dobson travelled to the site, sent away two unsuitable families and despite problems (the scrub was difficult to clear, the tents blew down, the road was impassable) remained enthusiastic and worked hard.4 Alix, a keen supporter of Dobson, visited the village in 1895 and was impressed, but the Clipper was critical: the site was poor, the soil bad, the place isolated, and settlers had no say in conditions - this was 'serfdom'.5 Emily Dobson did admit to less success than she had hoped, but by 1898 six families were settled in cottages with cleared land. The committee gave the settlement to the government and presented Emily Dobson with a painting for her work.6 The Clipper, less appreciative, accused her of trying to loom as a patron of the poor on other people's money.7 Paternalistic the scheme certainly was, but Emily Dobson and her committee put an enormous amount of hard work into it. The settlement did lack support in the community, shown by the lack of success of several fund-raising ventures8 and possibly caused by a dislike of such paternalism or a feeling that as the venture was doomed to failure any support would be wasted.

Different assistance was attempted in 1909 when a group of ladies tried to provide employment for women by establishing a lace-making industry.9 Any success was not noted.

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Though much charitable work was done through societies, much was also accomplished by individual women or small informal groups. Emergencies usually found women willing to help, from 1819 when a man drowned and two women were among 37 people who donated

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1 Tasmanian Mail 29 September 1894; Taylor p. 45
2 Tasmanian News 9 October 1894; Clipper 12 January, 23 February 1895
3 Tasmanian News 12, 19 October 1894; Tasmanian Mail 29 September 1894; Taylor p. 45
4 Tasmanian Mail 28 July, 8 September 1894, 13 July, 14 September 1895, 29 August 1896; Taylor pp. 47-49, 51
5 Tasmanian Mail 1 June 1895; Clipper 13, 20 April, 11 May, 3 August 1895
6 Tasmanian Mail 23 July 1898
7 Clipper 28 July 1894
8 For example, a fair (Tasmanian Mail 28 November 1893)
9 Tasmanian Mail 24 July 1909; Weekly Courier 6 February 1908
money to help his widow. The usual method of assistance was to open a subscription list, on which women usually featured. Sometimes more personal assistance was given, especially after disasters such as bushfires or floods; in Launceston in 1893 'ladies and gentlemen' gave food, clothes and relief work to those flooded out. Occasionally international disasters brought response; women in Hobart and Launceston collected the enormous sum of £4000 for widows and orphans of the Crimean War in 1854-1855, and other disasters women assisted included the Indian Famine Fund of 1900. Most unusually, in 1899 a group of Launceston women sent a telegram of sympathy to Madame Dreyfus in France from the women of Tasmania; they were 'thrilled' when Dreyfus was freed.

A large but generally unreported amount of charitable work was done by individuals, with many middle class women considering it their duty (as preached by churches) to assist local unfortunates. Helen Power of Campbell Town recollected visiting old women with her mother, taking candles and soap; Mrs Shoobridge, wife of a Derwent Valley landowner, visited the poor and sick. Many obituaries describe women as charitable to less fortunate neighbours; this was a much approved feminine activity. Some women were well-known for such activity, Mrs Gibson of Perth being an outstanding example. Rarely reported but probably frequent was help poorer women gave those of their own class.

Some women visited institutions to entertain or assist the inmates. Miss Davenport, daughter of a clergyman, tried to get a hospital patient an artificial leg in 1886; Mrs Colonel Sheldon gave annual feasts to inmates of the Brickfields Invalid Depot and, with other ladies, frequently visited them, 'singing, tendering Christian advice...[and] conversation; which, by her kindness of manner, was much appreciated; and I believe [often led to] very satisfactory results'. Such ministrations were not always appreciated. In 1862 Miss Gladwin, an elderly teacher, was asked to discontinue her Sunday visits to the Penitentiary, where she instructed the men and made them sing hymns. The superintendent said the men laughed at her and religion was ridiculed. In 1911 Mrs Stafford Bird, who had assisted

1 Hobart Town Courier 20 November, 11 December 1819
2 Tasmanian Mail 5 August 1893, 26 February 1898
3 A.L. Wayn A Century of Women's Activities (AOT); Tasmanian Mail 14 April 1900
4 Tasmanian Mail 23, 30 September 1899
5 National Trust Campbell Town Tasmania Campbell Town Municipal Council, Campbell Town, 1966, p. 323; Faye Gardam (ed) Immense Enjoyment Devon Historical Society, Devonport, 1987, p. 34
6 For example, Mercury 12 February 1904 (Mrs Fawns); Daily Post 24 October 1913 (Mrs Barnes)
7 Tasmanian Mail 26 July 1902; Greg Luxford William and Mary Ann Gibson the Author, Perth, 1984
8 Michael Sprod (ed) 'Down Wapping' Blubberhead Press, Hobart, 1988, p. 91
9 HSD 118/2 16 November 1885, 14 May 1886; Journals and Papers of Parliament 1887 paper 10
10 CSO 4/33/384 18 December 1862
prisoners since 1898, was debarred, possibly for similar reasons. She said her work 'gives scope and variety to one's life and fills up every leisure moment', and attempted unsuccessfully to form a Prisoners' Aid Society.1 More acceptable to institutions was fundraising, at which ladies were acknowledged to be competent.2 Many women collected on the streets for Hospital Day; this was a task 'very tiresome to frail femininity', wrote the cliche-ridden Daily Post, though it described the women as 'energetic and bright-faced'. One woman described the task cheerfully but said she was told by a passer-by 'in a freezing voice' that she did not approve of ladies collecting in the street.3 Another area in which there were many individual acts of charity was in assisting children, especially children in institutions and hospitals.4

Generally speaking women's individual charity was rarely reported, but it would appear that many women accepted that assisting the needy about them was part of their Christian duty and that such activity was widespread among Tasmanian women throughout the period.

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1 Daily Post 23 December 1911; Tasmanian Mail 4 August 1900, 27 December 1902
2 For example, Daily Post 20 March 1914
3 Daily Post 22 January 1910; Tasmanian Mail 28 March 1903
4 For example, Tasmanian Mail 4 December 1909, 6 March 1897, 3 January 1880; Daily Post 31 December 1913
Church Work and Friendly Societies

Church work among women began at much the same time as organised charity, that is, in the 1830s, when society had become settled and churches and respectable citizens established. Until the 1830s there is virtually no mention of women in any aspect of church life but worship. The womenfolk of the first Anglican clergymen did no church work;¹ Methodist ministers' wives were slightly more active, singing hymns and running a sewing class.² When the Auxiliary Bible Society was formed in 1819, only 4% of its subscribers were women.³ The 1830s saw several charitable societies, many of whose members were church-going women,⁴ but as yet churches did little charitable work. Within churches, however, women worked in fundraising. Two Methodist women raised money in 1829 and in 1833 women were asking for funds from door to door,⁵ but most fundraising was done in bazaars. By 1851 the church bazaar was well established and described as 'so unobjectionable';⁶ many women put enormous efforts into such work, using their feminine skills of sewing and cooking to transform inexpensive ingredients into saleable items. In 1857 a clergyman remonstrated with a group of girls for mixing sewing and praying with music and dancing. They told him if he continued they would 'send him about his business'.⁷ Other occasional criticisms were of bazaar workers being unladylike, 'showing off',⁸ but little notice was taken when bazaars were so profitable.

Most churches established Sunday Schools in the 1840s and from the first many teachers were women; in 1891 Presbyterian Sunday Schools had 30 male and 72 female teachers.⁹ Women were also organists, with seven of the ten organists at Holy Trinity from

¹ Betsy Mack (see Mary Nicholls, [ed] The Diary of the Reverend Robert Knopwood 1803-1838 THRA, Hobart, 1977, index entries under Elizabeth Mack) and Mrs Youl (ADB vol 2, p. 633)
² RD Pretyman A Chronicle of Methodism in Van Diemen's Land, 1820-1840 the Author, Melbourne, 1976, pp. 11, 30
³ Hobart Town Gazette 15 May, 12 June 1819
⁴ For example, the Dorcas Society, the committee to assist female immigrants (see section of this thesis entitled Assistance to Women)
⁵ Pretyman p. 74; Launceston Advertiser 17 October 1833
⁶ For example NS 638/110, 1842; A. Alexander Governors' Ladies THRA, Hobart, 1987, p. 138; Standard of Tasmania 20 October 1851
⁷ TC P 283.946 ROB p. 10
⁸ For example, Clipper 17 March 1894
⁹ For example, NS 499/2284; Pearce B. Barber Midland Methodism the Author, Launceston, 1936 passim; TC P 283.946 ROB; Proceedings of the Synod of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania, 1891-2, p. 29 (NS 229/234)
1850 to 1914 women. Sometimes organists were paid, but other church work was unpaid. Women also performed at fundraising concerts and provided refreshments at gatherings. Such activity, however, was all within the church circle. Even women in public positions, such as governors' wives, did little specific church work; the first bishop's wife, Anna Maria Nixon, paid visits, entertained informally, played the organ at services, acted as her husband's secretary and once beseeched for money for schools, but did no other work. Yet her brother-in-law described her as an excellent bishop's lady who worked as hard as her husband, implying that her actions were all that were expected of her.

By the 1850s there were a few women's societies but their short existence emphasises the secondary role of women in church life and women's acceptance of this. During the 1860s and 1870s there is little mention of women in organised church life. Only in the Catholic church did women play an active role; nuns worked from the 1840s, but as they were supported by the church they have been included with employed women. The role of lay Catholic women was, as in other churches, mainly confined to fundraising and singing in the choir, though in 1858 Bishop Willson founded the Sisterhood of Mary to instruct children on Sunday and sew for and assist the poor; it ran quietly until at least 1909.

The 1880s saw a few short-lived societies, but when an 'invaluable church worker' died even her activities were described as playing the organ and superintending the Sunday school, and in 1880 the Church News complained that few of the laity took an active role in church affairs. Perhaps the laity in all churches agreed with Congregationalist Charles Walch, who in a sermon entitled 'How can I glorify God?' advocated personal piety rather than active church participation.

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1 Frank Bowden and Max Crawford The Story of Trinity the Authors, Hobart, 1933, pp. 37-38
2 TC P 285.09946 EDW pp. 52, 56
3 For example, Church News April, May 1876, April 1885; TC P 283.946 ROB
5 Tasmanian Hebrew Benevolent Institution 1847, founded by Mrs Nathan (Woods' Almanac 1848 p. 194; Presbyterian Ladies' Benevolent Society 1842 (NS 499/288); several Congregational Ladies' Associations (NS 638/110, 1842, 1855)
6 Bishop Bromby's womenfolk worked 'unostentatiously' (Church News December 1888, December 1901); Bishop Sandford's wife disliked Tasmania and returned to England (ADB vol 6, p. 85)
7 WT Southerwood Planting a Faith vol 2, the Author, Hobart, 1970, p. 38; Walch's Almanacs 1863-1909, entries under Roman Catholic Church (for example 1864 p. 51)
8 Church News August 1885, June 1880
than external activity.\textsuperscript{1} Certainly this advice was given to Presbyterian girls, who in a series
of articles were told to be pure, only once being advised to give old clothes to the poor.\textsuperscript{2}

At this period several churches were established in which women played a more
prominent role. The Plymouth Brethren (1872), Churches of Christ (1876), Salvation Army
(1883) and Seventh Day Adventists (1887) all had women preachers; the novelty of the
Salvation Army's women preachers was said to captivate crowds.\textsuperscript{3} These women have been
included with employed religious workers. The role of lay women in these churches was, as
usual, fundraising and Sunday School teaching, though Salvation Army women played in
bands and sold the \textit{War Cry}. The Salvation Army did appear to use the attractiveness of
women to gain attention, the only church to use women's sexuality in this way.

From the 1890s organised activity by women became increasingly a feature of church
life. It has been claimed that this was a response to social changes, alleged to be destroying
the sanctity of the family, but such allegations were not markedly influential in Tasmania.
More probably women's increasing public activity was due to better economic conditions
and better contraception, meaning women had smaller families and more spare time; and a
response, even among conservative churchwomen, to the women's movement, and to
vehement encouragement by several bishops' wives.\textsuperscript{4} The Church of England was to the
forefront. Some dislike of public activity by women surfaced in 1887 at the suggestion that
Anglican nuns assist with nursing and education, with comments that nuns were 'ridiculous'
and 'monstrous'. Advocates of nuns said suffering must be attended to and educated nuns
were the best means; and also that the laity must act more; and that many, especially women,
were prepared to do so.\textsuperscript{5} So the social conscience of the Anglican church was awakening, at
the same time as women were prepared to move outside their traditional sphere of church
work. These forces were activated by the energetic and forceful Maud Montgomery, wife of
Bishop Montgomery, fresh from England and its new ideas of social purity and a new role
for women.

Women's activity was discussed in the 1890s, and several attempts to implement it
were made; mothers' meetings were held at Holy Trinity, for example, and Montgomery
organised Anglican children into a Children's Home Mission Union and women into an
apparently short-lived Ladies' Home Mission Union, whose members gave £1 annually, a

\begin{thebibliography}{1}
\bibitem{1} CEW Walch \textit{The Story of the Life of C.E.W. Walch} the Author, Hobart, 1908, p. 30
\bibitem{2} Tasmanian Presbyterian Magazine and Missionary Record July 1880 and 1880 passim (NS 229/302)
\bibitem{3} Alan Dyer \textit{God Was Their Rock} the Author, Sheffield, 1974; TC P 286.63 NEV; TC P Q 286.7 SEV; TL
P 267.15 SAL
\bibitem{4} See Beverley Kingston 'Faith and Fetes' in Sabine Willis \textit{Women Faith and Fetes} Dove, Melbourne, 1977,
pp. 20-28
\bibitem{5} Church News June 1887; Mercury 5 May 1887
\end{thebibliography}
limited aim. Even so, 30 branches with 350 members were established. She also encouraged local women to assist with the Home of Mercy, though few did so. More were involved in the Mothers' Union, established in England in 1876. In 1904 Bishop Mercer bemoaned the lack of corporate life in the church and urged the establishment of the Mothers' Union and the Girls' Friendly Society ('a grand field for the work of our educated women'). Many branches were founded, due largely to Josephine Mercer; and by 1913 the Mothers' Union had 1360 members and the Girls' Friendly Society 1555. To organise church work a Women's Council for Church Work was established and a woman worker employed. These committees involved 92 positions in 1903, though they were filled by 56 women, some being involved in up to five organisations. Approximately one third were wives or daughters of clergy.

There were more women's groups in individual parishes; for example, in Holy Trinity women were involved in a girls' club and night school (1896), mothers' meetings (late 1890s), a night school for boys (1890), a sewing class for girls (1899), the Ministering Children's League (1900), the Union Jack Society (1900), the New Guinea Mission Association (1901), Heralds of the King (1910), the Snowdrop Band (1910), a kindergarten at the Sunday School (1911), the Church of England Temperance Society (1910), and the Daughters of the King (1913). In 1914 a woman assistant to the vicar was appointed, showing the considerable expansion in parish work, mainly done by women. Such activity was duplicated to varying degrees in parishes around Tasmania.

Other churches did not have such a large-scale approach to women's activity, but in most this increased. The Presbyterian Women's Missionary Union began in 1903 and by 1910 there were sixteen branches of Presbyterian women's organisations, many probably of the PWMU. Branches averaged seventeen members. There were also Christian Endeavour societies for young people, formed in most Protestant churches; by 1896 there were 58

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1 Bowden and Crawford p. 64; WR Barrett *History of the Church of England in Tasmania* 1942, p. 48; *Church News* October 1901  
2 Year Book of the Church of England 1910 p. 49  
3 TC P 267.443 MOT; Year Book of the Church of England 1904 p. 98; *Tasmanian Mail* 24 June 1905; *Mercury* 11 March 1904; Barrett p. 57; Year Book of the Church of England 1913 p. 32  
4 Barrett p. 54; Year Books of the Church of England 1903 p. 7, 1904 p. 54; 1913 p. 32; 1914 p. 8; *Mercury* 10 March 1904  
5 Bowden and Crawford pp. 24, 50, 65, 66, 68-72. The function of all these groups is not clear, but all involved women or girls  
6 NS 229/156; TC P 285.09946 EDW p. 56; Proceedings of the Tasmanian State Assembly of the Presbyterian Church of Australia, 1906 p. 35, 1907 fold-out page at end of book, 1911 p. 42 (NS 229/236); NS 889/1-3
societies with 2400 members.\(^1\) Some were Methodist and Congregationalist; these churches had only scattered women's groups with women's societies not widely established, though there were some girls' clubs, sewing classes and sports teams.\(^2\) What is clear, however, is that in this and probably other churches, women could be 'towers of strength'; for example, on the Tasman Peninsula, where there were four or five little churches, women played the organ and ran Sunday Schools, and the one male minister took services. There was a female lay preacher at Brighton.\(^3\) In the Baptist church a few organisations for women were formed, mainly for girls.\(^4\) Similarly the Catholic church had little organised activity for women and only in 1914 was a systematic attempt made to establish parochial clubs, though societies for girls did exist.\(^5\) It was obviously more important for churches to retain girls' membership and attempt to keep girls pure than to establish societies for women, though many women were involved in running girls' societies. Smaller churches showed even less activity, though the Plymouth Brethren held a ladies' missionary sewing class in Sheffield in 1910.\(^6\) The interest in missionary societies by women can be seen as social as well as religious: sewing and raising money for foreign missions provided the advantages of church groups without the less pleasant aspects of home missions, actually having to confront the heathen and advocate Christianity. The number of women involved in all church groups by 1914 must have been considerable.

In some churches, again mainly the Anglican, women played an administrative role, though this remained minor. In 1895 a motion allowing women to vote for Synod representatives was lost by one vote; it was passed in 1905 and the following year increased women's activity was noted.\(^7\) In 1911 there were no female officials; in 1914 there were thirteen, churchwardens, secretaries or treasurers.\(^8\) The Congregational church also encouraged women; in 1903 Henry Button told members there should be no condescending patronage by men to women, who should be treated as equal. In 1902 there was one female secretary, in 1914 one female secretary and five treasurers (out of 29).\(^9\) The first female

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\(^1\) Walch's Almanac 1896 p. 295; NS 499/2287; NS 499/697
\(^2\) NS 499/3011 (Ladies Sewing Meeting, West Devonport); NS 499/2696 (Ulverstone Methodist Ladies Auxiliary); NS 499/856 (Ladies' Advisory Committee); NS 133/239; NS 663/58; NS 663/59; NS 663/62
\(^3\) The Tasmanian Congregational Year Book for 1907 p. 26-27, 1908 p. 28
\(^4\) For example TC P 286.194632 RET (Devonport Baptist Church); TC P 286.09946 PIT (Burnie Baptist Church)
\(^5\) Catholic Monitor 7 April 1894, 26 January 1900, 29 May 1914, 17 August 1906, 8 May 1914
\(^6\) Dyer p. 64
\(^7\) Church News May 1896; Barrett pp. 42, 58
\(^8\) Year Books of the Church of England, 1911 p. 17-22; 1914 pp. 18-25
\(^9\) The Tasmanian Congregational Year Books for 1893 p. 21-22; 1905 p. 48; 1913-1914 pp. 46-47
delegates at the annual state conference appeared in 1904 and by 1914, 20 of the 69 delegates were female.¹ The Seventh Day Adventists had a female secretary in 1909,² but in no other church did women move into administration. The Anglican and Congregational churches had deaconesses, but other mainstream churches did not permit women to take up clerical positions, though a female evangelist conducted a Methodist mission in 1897.³

One reason for the advancement of women in the Anglican church was the presence of two energetic bishops' wives. Maud Montgomery's unusual gifts as a speaker, great powers as a worker and wonderful business aptitude were praised, and Josephine Mercer's exceptional abilities, hard work for charity and desire to foster true womanhood were 'beginning to be widely and gratefully recognised' on her death in 1907.⁴ The 'beginning' shows that Tasmanian women were slow to appreciate and emulate the activities of these probably startling women, but they were there, and as bishops' wives had to be taken seriously; through them Tasmanian women were aware of English trends and ideas of women's role. Another prominent Anglican woman was Edith Norris, a university graduate who gave her husband 'great assistance' in running the theological college.⁵ With these examples, it is no wonder that some (albeit few) Tasmanian Anglican women did move into hitherto masculine areas. The Congregational church did not have such role models, but of all the churches it was the one in which the laity had the most influence. Perhaps women's activity reflected congregations' desires, while the reality of small congregations meant the most competent person, male or female, had to act. Other churches were both more traditional and more dominated by their male clergy; the Presbyterian and Catholic churches, for example, gave even lay men little say. Nevertheless, overall the activity of women in churches increased markedly from the 1890s, in women's organisations and sometimes in church administration.

Providing women with much the same advantages as church groups were friendly societies, though they did give more earthly benefits such as health insurance in place of spiritual ones. Friendly societies began for men in the 1840s; mainly insurance societies, they also fulfilled social, fraternal and philanthropic aims. The first group to establish women's societies were the teetotal Rechabites, in Hobart in 1875 and Launceston in 1878,⁶

¹ The Tasmanian Congregational Year Books 1904 p. 7; 1913-1914 pp. 24-25
² TC P Q 286.7 SEV
³ Year Books of the Church of England, for example 1903 p. 15, 1914 p. 17; TC P 286.63 NEV; NS 499/2287; The Tasmanian Congregational Year Book 1904 p. 52-54; 1909 p. 56-58
⁴ Church News December 1901; Mercury 29 March 1907
⁵ Year Book of the Church of England 1910 p. 49
⁶ Walch's Almanacs, 1876 p. 139; 1879 p. 168 (Friendship Tent); TC P 334.7 REC
and the Good Templars had mixed lodges, with some female officials in the 1890s.\(^1\) By 1900 there were four female lodges; by 1905 there were fourteen, with expansion especially in the IOOF (Oddfellows) Manchester Union and Loyal Orange Institution, and covering Hobart, Launceston and five country areas.\(^2\) By 1910 there were eighteen lodges and this figure remained steady until 1914, by which date seven orders had established women's lodges, involving groups with varying interests - Catholic, Protestant and teetotal, for example.\(^3\) What exactly the women did in lodges is unclear, but the rules of the Rebekah Lodges of the IOOF for 1934, probably similar to earlier rules, indicate they were expected to play a traditional feminine role of assisting the distressed, duties not required of male members to nearly the same degree. Like male lodges, however, Rebekah Lodges had a complex hierarchy of officers with regalia and jewels. Members had to be single, aged between sixteen and forty, of good morals and sound health, and believe in the Creator; or be wives of Oddfellows.\(^4\)

The number of women involved in lodges is unknown, but by 1905 it must have been considerable. Such societies gained their members largely from the working and lower middle classes, so involved different women from those in most other women's societies. Friendly societies enabled these women to play a public role without the domination of middle class women. Friendly societies fulfilled much the same purpose for these women as charitable and church societies for the middle class, providing social contacts and the chance to perform charitable works with the added benefit of insurance, not as necessary for wealthier women. As with middle class societies, a further role for women was running children's branches, which existed from 1887.\(^5\)

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\(^1\) Walch's Almanacs 1894 pp. 243-244; the death of a female Templar was reported in 1892 (*People's Friend* 1 October 1892)

\(^2\) Walch's Almanacs 1900 pp. 274-278; 1905 pp. 278-282

\(^3\) Walch's Almanacs 1905-1914, sections entitled Friendly Societies. Women's Lodges: Ancient Order of Foresters, Hibernian Australasian Catholic Benefit Society, Rechabites, Loyal Orange Institution, Protestant Alliance Friendly Society of Australasia, IOOF (Manchester Union), Good Templars, Druids

\(^4\) TC P 334.7 ODD

\(^5\) Walch's Almanacs 1887 onwards, sections entitled Friendly Societies
Efforts to change society

Charitable work aimed to assist the unfortunate within the framework of existing society and did not attempt to alter the status quo. As such it was welcomed by almost every section of Tasmanian society; on humanitarian grounds, for ameliorating poor conditions, on political grounds, for decreasing dissatisfaction with the existing system, by churches, as fulfilling Christian duty. In the 1890s, however, women did attempt to alter society in three areas: by improving sanitation and public health, by working for temperance, and by claiming the vote.

After several typhoid epidemics in Hobart in the 1880s civic reform, especially the need for a better sanitary system, became a catch-cry. Anxiety over Council inertia prompted the formation in 1891 of an all-male Sanitary Association in Hobart. Its lack of action spurred women to act, and Emily Dobson conferred with the Ladies' Christian Association and the governor's wife, Lady Hamilton, who had addressed women on this topic in 1887; nursing courses and lectures had resulted, but other action was limited, due, said the *Tasmanian Mail*, to Tasmanians' 'dreadful apathy'. In 1891 this waned and a meeting of women was convened, with Lady Hamilton in the chair and a committee of well-known women including Dobson and Maud Montgomery, the Bishop's wife. Lady Hamilton told the packed meeting that it was their duty to act, that women's highest duty lay as health conservers. Man's life and income and those of 'all those gentle clinging souls who depend on him' depended on his health. Typhoid came from poor sanitary arrangements and nothing was being done. 'You, a band of warm-hearted, earnest women' should petition Council and Parliament to act. Such flattery, emotion and appeal to ideals, duty and fear of loss of income was clearly the mixture Lady Hamilton thought most likely to stir Hobart women. Dobson was more forthright in criticising men, who had done nothing; 'we have to protest...let us cast off our proverbial lethargy'.

The women responded enthusiastically, and in five days collected 5,740 signatures to a petition to the House of Assembly and 5,413 to one to the Council. Such unprecedented activity by women attracted much attention, and women themselves saw shocking sanitary conditions as they canvassed. A Women's Sanitary Association was formed to urge reform: sanitary information was distributed to Hobart houses and unsanitary arrangements

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1 Stefan Petrov 'Sanatorium of the South?' Unpublished M.A. thesis, University of Tasmania 1983 pp. 190-199
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 22 September 1900, 19, 26 September 1891; *Mercury* 10 September 1891
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 12 September 1891
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 19 September 1891
5 *Tasmanian Mail* 3 October 1891
were reported. Frequent meetings were held where reports and lectures were given.\textsuperscript{1} By the end of 1891 the Association was full of enthusiasm: 'women have done good work in stirring up public opinion' and would not rest until all nuisances were swept away. They themselves had no power but could only urge the need for reform on the authorities and give them 'no peace till those complaints are addressed'.\textsuperscript{2}

The Association continued its work over the next five years, bringing sanitary matters before the Council, interviewing authorities, writing letters, acting as a thorn in the side of the civic authorities, but on the whole receiving little response.\textsuperscript{3} It received praise (it had caused authorities to move, a 'notable achievement')\textsuperscript{4} and criticism (the women were indelicate in dealing with unsavoury matters, made foolish statements and reports, damaged Hobart's reputation and were merely 'self-advertising').\textsuperscript{5} Ridicule was heaped on the women's heads, their letters were disregarded, and the gutters remained the same, said the Association in 1895; the next year it was optimistic, claiming it had aroused discontent which led to profitable action.\textsuperscript{6} Meat now had to be covered in the street, the worst of the gutters had been cleaned and public opinion had come round to its side, though there was much left to do. After this date, however, the Association's enthusiasm waned and in 1900 the president acknowledged that success had been less than had been hoped, because of a lack of co-operation among the population and a fear of identifying themselves by women with a movement called 'unfeminine' (though it was not, as it helped humanity).\textsuperscript{7}

The Women's Sanitary Association was an example of women stepping outside the usual feminine role of house and family, church and charity. They were active in a public concern seen as men's domain,\textsuperscript{8} criticised men (Council and Parliament), debated issues with men and stood up to them firmly, showing themselves independent of masculine guidance and authority. This resulted in considerable criticism, despite the women's attempt to show their work as truly feminine and Christian. In any case, the women continued despite criticism. Such activity was a considerable achievement for Tasmanian women of the 1890s, even though much of the driving force came from outsiders, especially Lady

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\textsuperscript{1} Tasmanian Mail 31 October, 21 November 1891; Mercury 24 October, 23 November 1891, 13 July 1892
\textsuperscript{2} Church News December 1891 p. 563
\textsuperscript{3} Tasmanian Mail 4 May, 19 October 1895; Tasmanian News 14 October 1895; Clipper 19 October 1895
\textsuperscript{4} Mercury 18 September 1892; Tasmanian Mail 19 October 1895; Tasmanian News 14 October 1895; Daily Post 11 June 1910
\textsuperscript{5} Tasmanian Mail 3 September 1892, 29 February 1896, 22 September 1900; Mercury 18 September 1892; Clipper 24 February 1894, 19 October 1895
\textsuperscript{6} Tasmanian Mail 4 May 1895, 19 September 1896
\textsuperscript{7} Tasmanian Mail 22 September 1900
\textsuperscript{8} Tasmanian Mail 22 September 1900

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Hamilton and Mrs Montgomery. Local women, particularly Emily Dobson, provided vital support.

After 1900 the Association became the Women's Health Association, asked by the Mayor to 'stand aside and watch' (which they were apparently content to do) and described as 'doing good work in a quiet way'. Drainage was still an issue; a pamphlet criticised arrangements and public meetings were promised, but activity petered out and the Association became a more usual women's group with quarterly meetings at which papers were read. In 1910 the president said that the Association concentrated on educating women and the authorities had shown sympathy. The reason for this is clear: women were not now criticising men and challenging their authority, but had reverted to a more acceptable feminine non-antagonistic role of advising other women, holding quiet meetings and possibly writing polite letters of request to the authorities. The president still could not point to any actual achievement. The Association continued to function in this way until 1914 and after.

There were other groups interested in public matters: women were members of the Citizens' Reform League of the 1900s and the Tasmanian Public House Trust Fund, which aimed to eliminate private profit by the retailer to reform the liquor traffic. Neither society was well-known or effective. A most unusual activity was that of Zeehan women, who in 1912 raised funds to provide the town with a lake and park for tourist purposes. Women also raised funds for the Launceston City and Suburbs Improvement Association; this was possibly when a Committee of Ladies of Launceston created a pavilion at the Cataract Gorge park. Similarly, nearly two decades later, Devonport ladies funded a band rotunda. In providing pavilions and rotundas women did not challenge men's authorities but reverted to their role as supporters of the status quo, so there was no criticism of this activity.

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1 *Tasmanian Mail* 22 September 1900, 20 September 1902
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 13 December 1902, 21 February, 3 October 1903
3 *Daily Post* 11 June 1910; *Tasmanian Mail* 16 December 1905, 18 August 1906, 8 June 1908
4 *Daily Post* 11 June 1910
5 *Daily Post* 13 June 1914: the Association celebrated 23 years' existence with a large gathering and considered forming more branches
6 Walch's Almanac 1906 p. 314
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 8 August 1912
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 3 October 1896; plaque on the pavilion, Cataract Gorge park, Launceston, dated 1896
9 *Tasmanian Mail* 1 January 1914

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The second area in which women tried to alter society was temperance. Temperance societies were established in the 1830s, but women played little part. In 1847 and 1848 visiting female speakers addressed meetings 'preparatory to the formation of a Female Association' but nothing eventuated. In 1851 Sarah Crouch and 'a few' other Hobart women established the Tasmanian Female Total Abstinence Association. 'Very many' families were visited and forty people signed the pledge, but there was no further indication of activity. The small number of women and lack of sustained success indicate little enthusiasm for direct temperance action among women, but they supported men's activity in the usual feminine way, with refreshments and music at functions. In 1857 women ran a bazaar and printed a journal, urging women not to be Do-Nothings, although it criticised girls' education of accomplishments as making women unfit for the real business of life, which it saw as housekeeping and family training, personal piety and good works. Committee members' menfolk included a doctor, a minister, a gardener and an upholsterer, so the temperance cause brought together a diverse group of women.

After the 1850s women's temperance work largely lapsed, though there were two female groups of teetotal Rechabites and some women belonged to general temperance societies. In 1873 the Women's Christian Temperance Union was formed in the USA; WCTU activity began in Tasmania in 1885 with the visit of an English female temperance advocate, who began a Hobart branch. Further stimulus came in 1886 when another visitor held several meetings and gained 24 new members. The branch adopted the constitution of the American WCTU, under which members signed the pledge and paid a subscription of

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1 Van Diemen's Land Auxiliary Temperance Society, Tasmanian Teetotal Society, Hobart Town Total Abstinence Society, Van Diemen's Land Total Abstinence Society, annual reports (Tasmaniana Library), and see Rod Kilner, 'Temperance and the Liquor Question in Tasmania in the 1850s' in THRA Papers and Proceedings vol 20, no 2, pp. 82-97

2 Van Diemen's Land Temperance Herald (hereafter referred to as Temperance Herald) December 1847, January 1848

3 Temperance Herald 23 October, 2, 9 June, 24 November 1851; an undated prospectus for the Tasmanian Female Temperance and Total Abstinence Association (TCP 178.2 TAS) probably belonged to this association

4 For example Temperance Herald June 1849

5 Ladies' Bazaar no 1, vols 1 and 2, December 1857 (Tasmaniana Library)

6 Walch's Almanacs from 1875, sections entitled Benefit and Friendly Societies, for example 1887 pp. 214-217; People's Friend November 1884

7 People's Friend March 1884, March 1886

8 NS 337/30, cutting 11 August 1910; Daily Post 15 August 1910
2/6 a year. They aimed to spread 'Gospel Temperance and Purity' and to advocate equality of men and women, so women's franchise was an important interest, though little was done initially in this area. The founder also advocated the policy of Do Everything, so the Union took up any cause which would promote its ideals. Some work was done but interest waned (as it did in Victoria).

In 1889 another visitor, Jessie Ackermann, revived interest, and the Hobart branch gained 1188 signatures to a petition opposing new hotels and asked the City Council to improve drainage. Again interest waned. Ackermann returned in 1892 and resuscitated or formed over twenty branches. In Hobart she visited hotels, speaking and praying, though without result. She gave 'stirring addresses' and spoke at torchlight processions with bands and at drawing-room meetings, including one at Government House, Lady Hamilton being sympathetic. The Hobart branch now took up a variety of work. Members asked Dr Crowther to introduce a bill to stop boys smoking; held cottage meetings; objected to indecent pictures on cigarette boxes; protested against hotels which broke regulations; objected to boys playing cricket on Sundays; visited a Chinese woman and attempted to obtain release from gaol for a Chinese man; commented on the fall of the VDL bank; and, as a Mr Morgan was reputed to be drinking again, promised to visit him. This variety of activity covered many aspects of life and members confronted a range of people. The report of one confrontation indicates the public's attitude to the WCTU. Ackermann told members the sign of the Good Woman hotel (a decapitated woman) was a disgrace, so a deputation asked first the owner then the brewery manager to remove it. The 'genial' manager was ruffled by the two 'strong-minded' Women's Righters who told him the sign was 'a libel on the fair name of women'. His 'gentle' protest failed and he agreed to remove it. So the manager was 'gentle' and 'genial', the women 'formidable' and 'strong-minded'; they were gently ridiculed, but did gain their point, and WCTU minutes mention the article almost with pride.

Ackermann's other branches did not always fare as well as Hobart. The Burnie branch enrolled eleven members, the womenfolk of merchants, farmers, and the Methodist
minister. At first they were uncertain of their role, suggesting usual feminine activities such as arranging a social, but later typical WCTU activities were undertaken: a canvass for members, a Band of Hope and Gospel Temperance meetings, a coffee room, poor relief, a vigilance committee to watch for Sunday hotel trading, plus distribution of Bibles to families whom members thought needed one. Possibly this activity was too much for eleven women and the branch folded.¹

Ackerman urged the formation of a state body and the first state convention was held in 1893. The president was Grace Soltau, wife of a Baptist pastor; the couple had come to Launceston in the mid-1880s and Grace Soltau established the city’s first successful rescue home.² She was able and energetic, but had a difficult task as president, as scattered Tasmanian members had little idea what to do. In the People’s Friend Soltau encouraged them and advised them to assist local individuals before tackling larger questions (thus continuing traditional, known work) and reported visits to many branches. ‘I get many confessions of ignorance and inability’, she wrote; ‘I believe our Union is a great education for women with a niche for everyone’. Every woman infinitely preferred a quiet home life, but a sense of need made them do outside work to help those whose homes were not happy.³ She acknowledged difficulties: ‘We are sure to receive many rebuffs, sneers and incredulity that women will have the courage to continue. Do not be discouraged...I know some of you are feeling downhearted just now, and wonder if it is worthwhile to go on’*. At the convention work was reported. Members were encouraging (to an undefined degree) state school savings banks and temperance instruction in schools; drawing room meetings for ‘cultured women’; meetings to instil temperance in prisoners, paupers, the sick, soldiers, sailors and foreigners; rescue work among prostitutes; scrutiny of public advertisements; the use of unfermented wine in communion services; opposition to narcotics; flower missions for hospital patients; and coffee rooms to provide an alternative to hotels. Interest in women’s franchise was ‘in its infancy’ but a paper on the topic was read, and home making was claimed as the Union’s ‘first great object’.⁵

¹ NS 337/66 2 February, 16 March, 20 April, 9 June, 17 August, 21 September, 19 October 1892
² NS 337/2,3; Middleton and Maning 1887 p. 251; Church News July 1892
³ People’s Friend January 1893, May, July 1892
⁴ People’s Friend February 1893
⁵ NS 337/2
Despite this list of achievements some branches folded. Soltau left the colony and the union's demise was feared. A new president, Mrs Annie Blair, revived the Union. She was 'startled' when asked to stand and claimed she had no brilliant gifts or educational advantages, but she proved an excellent president, 'able, self-denying, earnest'. She encouraged struggling branches, including the Burnie branch. The first meeting was attended by six women only, but they elected as president able and inspiring JessicB Rooke, the wife of the local doctor, who had recently arrived from the mainland where she had been involved in church and WCTU activity. Even so the branch languished until in 1895 a visiting speaker, Miss Murcutt, held a mission, telling Burnie women they were created man's equal and had the right to be heard on subjects which affected their social life and happiness, and the right to choose their vocation and protect their homes. Her mission was an enormous stimulus, bringing the Union more members and more activity of all sorts, with up to 29 present at meetings. Enthusiasm was maintained by visits from Blair and considerable activity by Rooke. New branches were formed, though a visit by Rooke and Blair to Stanley did not result in the formation of a branch for the lack of a suitable woman as president.

Under Blair branches increased to seventeen and membership to 329, and the Union worked in 43 departments. Many mainly distributed literature, but activities included visiting prisons, hospitals and ships; holding classes for Chinese; rescue work; evangelistic, drawing-room, cottage and mothers' meetings; and booths at shows and regattas to provide an alternative to alcohol. Many juvenile Temperance Leagues were begun, the Beaconsfield branch being the largest in Australia, as well as branches of the Young Women's Christian Temperance Union. In several areas the Union claimed success; non-conformist churches used unfermented wine, savings banks and temperance instruction were introduced in state schools, a petition resulted in two licences being refused, and a football match on a Sunday was stopped. Women's franchise was popularised with meetings held, a large petition

1 NS 337/3, NS 337/7
2 The Blairs were first mentioned in Launceston in 1892; Annie Blair's husband was Robert S. Blair, but his occupation was not given. They lived in a house whose rateable value was £28 per annum so were presumably not wealthy (Post Office Directories for this period)
3 People's Friend 1 May 1894; Post Office Directory 1894-5 p. 225
4 NS 337/66 2 November 1894, NS 337/88 1 February 1906
5 For example, NS 337/66 25 January 1895, when only three members attended a meeting and little was done
6 Wellington Times 19, 23 March 1895; NS 337/66 5 April 1895
7 NS 337/66 5 April 1895, 1894-6 passim; 30 October 1896 (Stanley)
8 NS 337/4, 5, 6, 7, 8
9 NS 337/5,6

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organised, and the subject aired.\textsuperscript{1} A petition was presented against the Contagious Diseases Act\textsuperscript{2} and other petitions protested against bars at the Tasmanian International Exhibition, lotteries and alcohol at railway works and stock sales; the number of bars was decreased.\textsuperscript{3} Altogether the Union was busy with some success, and when Blair resigned in 1898 she claimed drunkenness was less and there was less prejudice against the Union. It had opened many women's eyes to their responsibilities and privileges, but she warned that temperance must remain the main aim.\textsuperscript{4}

Despite the successes there were problems, especially for country branches, and 'some dear local secretaries were tempted to give up' as they thought they achieved little.\textsuperscript{5} By 1897 21 branches had been formed, seven had folded, three had reformed; the number of members had risen but many had left.\textsuperscript{6} In 1896 Blair mentioned other problems: prejudice had to be fought; many 'dear sisters' felt they were only just holding the fort; some work seemed unsuccessful. A major problem was apathy, and Blair criticised women who were 'satisfied to go to their graves without having made a single creature better or happier, outside the narrow circle they call "home" but which is really "self"'.\textsuperscript{7} The Union relied on a few devoted and energetic women; Blair, for example, attended 98 meetings in 1895 and had a large correspondence.\textsuperscript{8}

In 1898 Rooke became president; she was also Australian president. She had sound judgment, tact, sympathy, patience and gentleness; she was an excellent if theatrical speaker and a tireless worker. Some felt she was autocratic and too extreme in her views, but in general she was esteemed.\textsuperscript{9} Despite this, the Union began to lose momentum; little new was

\textsuperscript{1} NS 337/3, 5, 6
\textsuperscript{2} NS 337/3
\textsuperscript{3} NS 337/4, 6, 7
\textsuperscript{4} NS 337/7
\textsuperscript{5} NS 337/7
\textsuperscript{6} NS 337/6, 7, 8
\textsuperscript{7} NS 337/5
\textsuperscript{8} NS 337/5
\textsuperscript{9} NS 337/66 passim; NS 337/88 1 February 1906; \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 28 April 1900; \textit{Clipper} 26 September 1903; Heather Radi (ed) \textit{200 Australian Women} Women's Redress Press, Broadway NSW, [1988] pp. 46-47; and see NS 325/8A for Rooke's behaviour in the NCW seen as autocratic. Jessie Rooke was born in Tasmania in 1845 (death certificate, Emu Bay, 1906 no 140). It is claimed she was the daughter of a shepherd for the Van Diemen's Land company (Radi, no reference provided) though her family stated she was the daughter of Mr and Mrs Joseph Raymond, of Leith (\textit{Tasmanian Mail} 19 February 1914), and she was described as a 'well-born Scotch woman' (NS 337/88). If the former version if true it is interesting that she managed to transform herself into a 'gentle and refined', efficient and capable', and 'well-born' president of an
attempted and by 1904 there were only seven branches and 188 members. In many areas little beyond distribution of literature was attempted, partly due to activity by other groups (rescue work and mothers' meetings were left to churches), and interest in the suffrage waned. In 1899 the peace movement was an area of interest but the Boer War dampened enthusiasm, the small peace movement being swamped by general patriotic fervour.1 Juvenile Leagues also declined; the minutes of one League show this was not surprising, as little activity was encouraged beyond giving children addresses.2 Lack of enthusiasm was not a problem for the WCTU only, and in 1899 the secretary commented that most Christian and philanthropic workers agreed Tasmania was not an easy place to work and sustain interest.3

After 1902 little activity took place, though by 1905 the situation had improved somewhat.4 In 1906, however, Rooke died, and the Union went through 'a very trying time'.5 Finally Mrs Beeton-Braham (apparently the wife of a storekeeper6) was elected president; some departments of work were abolished and others amalgamated. In 1907 campaigns were waged in favour of local option and against the employment of barmaids,7 but once the relevant Acts were passed the WCTU again sank into lethargy; in 1909 'some' reports were encouraging, in 1911 membership had dropped and funds were low, and in 1912 there was discussion as to whether the union would continue, but a visiting speaker urged women to keep going and look for a new leader.8 Mrs E. Woods, wife of a Congregational minister, was elected and the Union's outlook improved with more branches and members and increased activity in protests against compulsory army training, the sale of

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Australia-wide body and also that she thought it necessary as a doctor's wife to hide her humble origins.

When she returned to Burnie, however, there was no mention of any earlier connection with the area. On her death her Tasmanian origins were not publicly mentioned, though frequently obituaries omitted reference to their subjects' early lives (Advocate 5 and 6 January 1906). Note that Blair, for example, apparently saw no need to hide her humble origin.

1 NS 337/9, 13, 10, 8, 9
2 NS 337/63, NS 337/13
3 NS 337/8
4 People's Friend 1 April 1905
5 People's Friend 1 November 1906
6 Mrs E. Beeton-Braham had been a member of the WCTU in 1892-1895 at Launceston, in 1898 at Wynyard, and in 1904 in Launceston again. Her husband was apparently described as a storekeeper in 1899, a confectioner and agent in 1904 (see Post Office Directories for these dates)
7 People's Friend 1 November 1907
8 People's Friend 1 November 1909, 1 June 1911, 1 April 1912
liquor at army camps, and the Maternity Bonus (as it was given to unmarried mothers). At this date, too, the Union began feminine activity usual on the mainland and overseas for some time, protesting against the Contagious Diseases Act and working for the raising of the age of consent to eighteen. Why it began this action so late is unclear, but perhaps it was an example of Tasmanians being behind the times, taking up causes decades after the rest of the world (and with some success, as the Contagious Diseases Act was repealed in 1917).

Two members asked the Director of Education for anti-smoking to be taught in schools and were incensed when he refused, feeling 'that as citizens we have a right to demand that the youth of our land be protected from dangerous practices'. The Launceston branch held meetings for factory girls. Any success by 1914 was local and minor; for example in Geeveston a licence for an alcohol booth at a sports game was stopped. From 1899 the WCTU presented twelve petitions to Parliament, but in contrast with earlier large petitions these were small, nine having under five signatures and the remainder averaging 37. They protested against the employment of barmaids, juvenile smoking, indecent publications, lotteries, betting, the Licensing Bill, and the display of pictures of prize fighting (the largest petition), and supported the employment of women inspectors in factories and Local Option. Larger petitions from the 'Women of Tasmania' concerning Local Option and barmaids were possibly the work of the WCTU, however.

The general picture was reflected in local branches. In Burnie Rooke dominated all activity and ran the branch with great energy, and with more success that she ran the statewide organisation. There appeared no resentment of her domination and other members were all gratitude, with a eulogy on her death saying that though she was Australian president 'she belonged to us'. After her death the reason for this adulation became clear; other members had little originality or inspiration and though some work was maintained nothing new was attempted, few attended meetings and achievements were minor (dentists were asked to keep temperance literature in their waiting rooms). From 1910 when the

1 People's Friend 1 May, 1 June, 1 July, 1 September 1912, 5 March 1913; NS 337/21, 4-7 March 1913; Daily Post 25 February 1914
2 NS 337/21 4-7 March, 10 October 1913; 7 Geo V no 64
3 NS 337/21 25, 28 August 1913
4 Examiner 5 March 1913
5 Journals and Papers of Parliament 1899, 1900, 1902, 1904, 1905, 1907, 1908, 1910, lists of petitions presented to parliament
6 NS 337/67 26 April, 29 November 1904, 25 April, 29 August 1905, 30 January 1906; Advocate 5 January 1906

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Methodist minister's wife was elected president activity picked up; it fell away again when she left the district.¹

Several factors led to the Union's decline, one being lack of interest, particularly as the difficulty of any substantial achievement became obvious. Possibly the division of enthusiasm among so many objects weakened the Union, as Blair realised; energy was wasted on minor issues, though it was only in these issues that success could be gained. A further problem, particularly in rural areas such as Burnie, was a lack of leaders.² Tasmania provided few effective leaders; in 1896, for example, the Union held a meeting at New Norfolk, but though some women there were keen, no leader came forward so nothing could be done.³ Some leaders, like Soltau and Blair, came from elsewhere but their number was limited. Middle and upper class women usually provided leadership of societies, but the identification of the Union as a lower middle class organisation and the necessity for members to sign the pledge kept out many women who would have supported the Union in areas such as franchise (acknowledged by Rooke when in 1904 she formed the Women's Suffrage Association separately from the Union⁴). The lack of well-educated upper class members meant leaders had to be found from the middle and lower middle classes, who often lacked the self-confidence, experience and possibly desire to lead and whose lack of education probably made them feel inadequate to fulfill a public role. Ministers' wives sometimes became leaders, but they tended to stay in districts for limited periods. There was less difficulty in gaining members and under a capable leader women were usually willing to attend meetings and carry out work, though with varying degrees of enthusiasm. Some, however, disliked joining anything as forceful and active as the WCTU, and attempts (not strikingly successful) were made to enrol such women in branches of the Women's Total Abstinence Band which involved no public action.⁵

Most members were married and came from the middle and lower middle classes, as they did in Victoria.⁶ In 1892-1893 the occupations of the husbands or fathers of 43 of the 44 branch officials (in whom the middle class segment was probably over-represented) were:

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¹ NS 337/67 31 January 1907 (dentists) and 1906-1914 passim; a similar picture emerges with the Hobart branch (NS 337/29, 30)
² A problem mentioned by the Union's secretary, NS 337/5
³ Mercury 22 August 1896
⁴ NS 337/13. Women like Emily Dobson, sympathetic to many of the Union's aims, did not usually join; Dobson finally did so in 1910
⁵ NS 337/65
⁶ Hyslop p. 47
Few members came from the upper class, who as well as rarely being total abstainers may have felt the Union socially inferior; or the working class, who also may have been reluctant to sign the pledge and who possibly felt the Union too middle-class oriented. By 1902 the situation had changed a little: fewer husbands were labourers or businessmen, more were farmers, and three of 21 women earned their own living, as postmistress, teacher and boarding housekeeper, so the Union was no longer the preserve of non-employed housewives.¹ Throughout the period many members belonged to non-conformist churches, where temperance's strength lay. The Union sometimes worked with other women's organisations such as the National Council of Women, the Women's Sanitary Association and the YWCA, for with the Union's wide range of objectives its work frequently overlapped that of other organisations.

Despite its many weaknesses and difficulties the WCTU continued to exist, an achievement in itself in Tasmania, and was an important organisation for many women. It encouraged them to enter activity outside the home, giving them a chance to speak in public, make reports and lead other women. For the first time women were told it was their duty to fulfil this public role ('none has the right to be a modest violet'²) and participation was endorsed and even encouraged by churches, giving it complete respectability. Women outside the Union could see other women running the organisation with some success, acting independently of men, and taking up new ideas, particularly that of the equality of women with men and the need for female suffrage. Such ideas were usually slow to spread in Tasmania and the WCTU was an important vehicle in their dissemination, especially among the lower middle class. It may seem anachronistic that the only group working for the equality of women was largely composed of lower middle-class non-conformist

¹ NS 337/11 and Post Office Directory, 1902
² NS 337/8

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housewives, usually a conservative group, but these women had the strong religious and pro-temperance ideals which led them to join the Union and once there, other ideas were imposed on them by the WCTU’s program. Few Tasmanian women were initiators or leaders in the Union: the impetus for action usually came from outside Tasmania, and local women were pushed into organising roles then kept going by encouragement from outside (mainland and overseas visitors continued to visit Tasmania and address meetings all through this period).

WCTU members spoke their minds on many topics (for example, telling doctors they were using too much morphine) and there was some criticism of members as busybodies trying to impose their views on others (for example, the *Tasmanian Mail* thought the Union’s backing of a curfew to keep children off the streets ‘too tyrannical’). At the same time there was some admiration for members and after a few years criticism lessened, though it is impossible to say if this was caused by the public becoming accustomed to women’s public activity or because it was becoming apparent that this activity would never succeed in its major aims. The Union did its best to preserve a ‘womanly’ image, even while encouraging women to behave in a way considered ‘unwomanly’, speaking in public and taking a public stance: it praised its members’ ‘patient, sweet womanliness and gentle bravery’, for example, and when the Australian president visited her sweet motherliness and true womanliness were emphasised. ‘To every true woman the dearest spot on earth is Home Sweet Home’ said the state president, at the same time as the Union desired women to leave their homes in its interests, or at least broaden their interests to include its extra-domestic activities.

Closely connected with the WCTU, in that this body was its main promoter, was the third area in which women tried to change the status quo; suffrage. Interest in women’s suffrage grew slowly in Tasmania. The *Mercury* ridiculed a lecture on women’s rights in 1879, and ten years later the small audience at a debate on women’s suffrage was blamed on the

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1 NS 337/5 p. 15
2 For example, *People’s Friend* 1 March 1911
3 NS 337/5
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 8 June 1901, and see *Mercury* 1 December 1892, *Clipper* 5 September 1896 (one of the rare issues on which these three newspapers agreed!)
5 NS 337/9, 8
6 NS 337/13
unattractive topic, though most speakers were in favour. In 1891 some advocated women voting; the *Tasmanian Mail* commented that though the topic was often ridiculed its fairness was beginning to be seen as women were recognised in many walks of life as equal to men. The writer of the *Mail* 's women's column, 'Alix', opposed women's suffrage, saying men and women had different spheres and most women desired the degrees of A.B. and A.M. (A Bride and A Mother), but a year later she 'strongly' favoured women's suffrage and the fact that the *Mail* allowed her to air her views indicates growing community support for the idea. She did not indicate what made her change her opinion. At the same time a Madame Henry made several public speeches against women's suffrage, saying women's place was in the home, her aim 'to love and be loved'.

From 1893 women could vote at municipal elections, but this aroused little comment and little desire for a wider vote. The WCTU, however, was by now a large organisation. Though its main interest was temperance and women joined because of their support of temperance, it inherited women's suffrage as part of its international platform and was beginning to agitate for it. In 1893 Ethel Searle read a paper on the topic at a private house and at the State WCTU conference, and some meetings promoting women's suffrage were held. This was hardly wide publicity, however, and in 1894 Alix wrote that 'in Tasmania we disregard questions that are agitating society elsewhere - even women suffrage, so burning a question elsewhere, is disregarded, except by a few'. She attended a WCTU suffrage meeting and was disappointed; the audience was small, and she felt it a pity that women's suffrage was so closely connected with the WCTU. 'No doubt its members are good women...but the fact that they are partisans of a cause keeps many from allowing themselves to be identified with them'. The Labor *Clipper* somewhat remarkably praised the WCTU's involvement, as the organisation was not hampered by class or conservative ideas. The WCTU's advocacy grew; public and drawing room meetings were held, with some in country districts, and petitions were presented to parliament in 1896 (771 and 1502 signatures from 'female residents of Tasmania') and 1898 (3020 and 2903 signatures from

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1 *Mercury* 23, 24 July 1879; *Tasmanian Mail* 27 July 1889
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 16 May, 18 October 1891
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 30 May, 13 June 1891
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 28 April 1894
5 *Tasmanian Mail* 27 August 1892, 6 May 1893; *Clipper* 13 May 1893
6 *Clipper* 9 December 1893; *Tasmanian Mail* 17 June 1893
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 28 April 1894
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 28 April 1894. Hyslop states that in Victoria too suffrage was weakened by its connection with temperance (Hyslop p. 54)
9 *Clipper* 28 March 1896
'residents', presumably including men), organised by the WCTU. They showed considerable effort by the WCTU and considerable support in the community for women's suffrage, and growing interest is evident in 1895 when 'many' women voted at municipal elections. No suffrage activity was reported which was not organised by the WCTU. Also in 1898, however, a petition signed by 1045 'inhabitants of Tasmania' requested that women be not given the franchise; who organised or signed this is unknown.

In 1895, 1896 and 1898 bills allowing women's suffrage were passed by the House of Assembly and rejected by the Legislative Council; although 'a number of ladies of a certain stamp with their male friends had been stumping the country' for suffrage the women of Tasmania did not want it, decided the Councillors. Comments in the Mail indicate varying degrees of interest: in 1894 'most men and women interested in the questions of the day were glad to see women suffrage introduced in parliament', but in 1895 'except for a few, the women of Tasmania are not keenly agitated for or against the idea'; in 1896 Tasmania was held to be 'not quite ready' for women's suffrage - 'there is a general idea that there is no valid objection to women voting if they want to, but little enthusiasm in advocating it'. Even the WCTU admitted that enthusiasm was waning, and in 1899 there were 'many dissentient voices' on the topic, as indicated by the previous year's anti-suffrage petition. Agitation was sometimes 'worked up', for example by the WCTU's petition, but generally women were described as indifferent to suffrage, federation and most of the questions of the day, despite the efforts of literary and debating societies to interest them. Why? asked Alix. Was it the fault of the family, education, or the enervating climate? This lack of interest came despite the fact that both she and the editor of the Tasmanian News, Sara Gill, were strongly in favour; the Mercury, however, was opposed. Tasmanian women were more eager to be emancipated by the bicycle than by voting, thought Alix. Even Henry Dobson, husband of able Emily Dobson, opposed women's suffrage because

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1 Tasmanian Mail 4 June 1898, 29 August 1896 4 April 1895, 20 June 1896; Clipper 28 March 1896; Journals and Papers of Parliament 1896, 1898, lists of petitions presented to parliament (the two sets of figures are for petitions presented at the same time to the Legislative Council and the House of Assembly)
2 Clipper 14 December 1895
3 Journals and Papers of Parliament 1898, list of petitions presented to parliament
4 Mercury 31 July 1895, 24 September 1896, 3 August, 8 September 1898
5 Tasmanian Mail 4 August 1894, 4 April 1895, 27 June, 5 September 1896
6 NS 337/7; Tasmanian Mail 21 October 1899, and see 9 July, 29 October 1898
7 Tasmanian Mail 29 August 1896
8 For example, Tasmanian News 1, 3, 15 July 1896
9 Clipper 18 October 1902, 12 December 1903
10 Tasmanian Mail 19 September 1896
'politics were too dirty for women', and Dobson herself never spoke publicly on the issue. This absence of support by Tasmania's leading woman activist probably weakened the suffrage movement. It is surprising that Dobson, struggling against entrenched male opposition for improvements in sanitation and employment, did not realise that her women's groups would have more power if women could vote, but like many Tasmanians she was more a doer than a thinker, and was little given to philosophical questionings.

Little interest was taken in women's suffrage after its triple rejection, and in 1898 it was described as a neglected issue few cared about. Any publicity appeared to be anti-suffrage, and in a public speech in 1899 Lady Braddon said she did not believe in women voting. When Ida McAulay addressed three ladies' literary clubs on the topic she regretted she was the only member of the Itinerants (one of these clubs) in favour of women's suffrage. Tasmanian women did receive the vote in federal politics in 1902, which appeared to create little interest: the Clipper claimed only five Tasmanian women were concerned with the Federal vote.

Parliamentary activity was resuscitated again in 1902, when an electoral bill was amended in the House of Assembly to include women's suffrage; the argument was raised that few except 'wild women' had asked for it, but the majority agreed with one member who said women's vote would not do much harm. The Legislative Council threw out the bill, to little public comment. In 1903 Jessie Rooke of the WCTU tried to rouse enthusiasm, giving a meagrely-attended public lecture and a talk, with Josephine Mercer (the Anglican bishop's wife), to the NCW, but no agitation eventuated. Finally in 1903, with little public comment, Parliament passed a bill enfranchising women, largely because even Council members and the Mercury admitted it was an anomaly that women could vote in federal but not state elections. As Tasmanian women obtained the vote with a minimum of effort of their part, it is not surprising that they failed to sympathise with British suffragettes; for example, in 1907 'Russet', the author of the Mail's Launceston women's column, wrote that 'every common-sense woman must feel a thrill of disgust' at their behaviour.
undermined 'the influence for good which women in general do possess'. That year women were enabled to sit on the Hobart City Council, though none did, and the *Daily Post* commented that there was 'no need for Australian women to fight in an unwomanly way for justice'.

Why educated middle and upper class women, who led campaigns for the vote on the mainland, did not do the same in Tasmania is difficult to explain except inasmuch as they were generally less active than their mainland counterparts. Possibly they did not wish to be identified with the lower-class WCTU (a sentiment shared by some mainland supporters) or seen as 'wild women'; possibly like Emily Dobson they were more interested in practical activity than with theoretical advantages. No leader emerged to organise and inspire a suffrage movement; Ethel Searle vanished early from the scene, Jessie Rooke, Australian president of the WCTU, had many other interests beside the vote and had little success outside the WCTU, and few other individuals are mentioned. Even Alicia O'Shea Petersen, later the first female parliamentary candidate, did not advocate female suffrage. The widespread lack of interest in suffrage so often reported, even among educated women, would have meant difficulty in recruiting followers in any case. Nevertheless, there was some pro-suffrage activity, particularly in the mid-1890s; it was one area in which some Tasmanian women struggled for change, and the one area in which they eventually, and largely because of outside influences, gained success.

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1 *Tasmanian Mail* 4 May 1907, 8 May 1913; see also 31 October 1908, 7 March 1912
2 *Daily Post* 6 December 1913
3 See Betty Searle *Silk & Calico: Class, Gender and the Vote* Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1988, p. 20
Trade Unions

The section of this thesis dealing with women's industrial employment has demonstrated that Tasmanian women took very little action to improve their working conditions or wages, and this included involvement with trades unions, which came late and was then ineffectual. Trade Unions existed briefly in Tasmania in the 1840s but there is no evidence that women were involved. With the growth of industry in the 1880s unions became active again, but no women's unions were formed as occurred in Victoria and New South Wales, and it was stated in 1884 that women did not have the means of forming unions; in fact they could have done so, but none did. The first union to involve women was the Drapers' and Grocer's Assistants' Association, which fought for a weekly half-holiday and shorter hours. At one meeting speakers thought 'a canvas [sic] carried on by their women co-workers' would be successful and in Launceston 'lady members' did canvass with great success. After 1895 the Association did little but hold concerts. Lack of union activity by women is evident in an 1898 Clipper article: 'Don't ask how many union women there are in Tasmania; also don't ask what wages our workwomen meekly accept'. The Clipper sporadically urged both male and female workers to form unions over the next few years, but little was done and most unions, including those which involved women in any way, were ineffectual. In 1907, for example, the Hobart Tailors' Society complained to the government about low contract prices for government uniforms and charged it with sweating women. No rise in wages was reported. More usual was the activity of the Tailors' and Tailoresses' Society, which gave a social.

The 1907 Royal Commission into Wages and Wageearners stirred parliament to regulate conditions, and also stirred workers into more activity. From 1909 there was some

1 Michael Quinlan 'Trade Unionism and Industrial Action in Tasmania 1830-1850' in THRA Papers and Proceedings vol 33, no 1, pp. 8-31
2 See W. Nicol 'Women and the Trade Union Movement in New South Wales:1890-1900' in Labour History no 36, May 1979, pp. 18-30
3 Tasmanian News 8 October 1884
4 In 1885 members were asked if it would not be 'a manly action' to obtain a half-day holiday for tailoresses, presumably unable to fight for this themselves (Mercury 31 October 1885)
5 Clipper 23 November 1895
6 For example Clipper 31 October 1896 (its twelfth concert!)
7 Clipper 19 November 1898
8 For example, Clipper 30 September, 21 October 1899, 18 March 1905
9 The Daily Post stated there was little effective unionism in Tasmania until 1908 (25 January 1911)
10 Clipper 28 September 1907
11 Clipper 17 August 1907
trade union activity among women, although few records exist and evidence is scanty. The only union involving women whose records exist was the Australian Boot Trade Employees Federation's Hobart branch. In 1911 'contributions' (presumably from male members) were £40/8/6 with females' contributions £2/16/-, so females formed approximately 6% of members (or possibly slightly more, as women's subscriptions were usually lower than men's). Nevertheless, the minutes show that the executive was male and business concerned male members' interests entirely. In 1908 the Tailors' Society was described as giving in to employers, while female workers did not support it and were content to slave: they had been sweated so long, said the Daily Post, they had no spirit left. If the Society's executive had the same attitude as the bootmakers, probably a further factor was the domination by the union of men and men's interests. By 1909 the Society had become the Federated Tailors' Union with some women members; by 1911 the Federated Clothing Trades Union existed and decided to ask for better conditions, with apparently little result. In 1913 the FCTU had one female committee member, Elsie Williams, also active in the Labor Party. Nevertheless female clothing workers, widely scattered among many small establishments, had little involvement in trade unions.

More easily organised in they they worked in a few, large factories were jam workers. In 1909 W.A. Woods urged all employees at Hobart factories to form a union, and a branch of the Jam Workers' Union resulted. By 1911 this had 400 members, nearly all the jam workers in Hobart, and it was ensuring the Factory Act was enforced. In 1913 the Union was flourishing and membership increasing. Nearly all female workers must have been members.

In 1910 legislation allowed the formation of Wages Boards; this encouraged the formation of trade unions, to fight for the establishment of a Board then see the workers' case was adequately presented. The effect of Wages Boards was limited, as employers could enforce the minimum wage on any employee, while there was a lack of uniformity in awards and it was claimed employers could manipulate or 'snap their fingers' at Board

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1 Archives of Business and Industry, Canberra, E134/7/1, receipt book. The roll book (E134/8) lists members by initials only so their gender is unknown
2 Archives of Business and Industry, Canberra, E 134/1/1
3 Daily Post 21 November 1908
4 Daily Post 16 January 1909
5 Clipper 9 May 1908; Daily Post 20 July, 25 January 1911
6 Daily Post 15 July 1913
7 Clipper 27 February, 20 March 1909; Daily Post 10 June 1911, 23 July 1913
8 Daily Post 25 January 1911

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decisions; nevertheless, industries wanted Boards and a number of trade unions were established which women could join. Shop assistants were notoriously badly paid and for years Woods urged them to form a union. In 1911 a branch of the Shop Assistants Union was formed in Hobart, largely by mainland organiser Fred Katz. At one meeting his wife Alicia Katz spoke, saying she was pleased to see so many women present. Female labour had come to stay and meant more competition and lower wages unless union activity prevented this. The Labor Party wanted equal pay, which would prevent women replacing men in work, an undesirable event. Both sexes must fight together for what they wanted.

This rather muddled speech shows the conflict within the trade union movement; it was mainly concerned with men's wages and saw women's place as in the home, but the growing number of female employees were workers and should join unions and fight for better conditions. Trade unions needed the support of all workers, male and female, and women were urged to greater activity: 'On no account should women be overlooked in trade organisation' wrote the Daily Post. The Labor Party's platform included equal pay for women, achievement of which would both stop women's competition with men and give women higher wages; the conflict inherent in this position - that if women were prevented from competing with men they would be unemployed - was never spelt out, but when in power Labor made no effort to implement equal pay and there is no evidence that women workers demanded it.

Soon after Alicia Katz's speech the Shop Assistants' Union had fifty members and a ladies' social committee. In 1911 the general committee included four women and the Union was pressing for a Wages Board. By 1912, however, it was languishing, though 900 assistants were eligible to join. An employee stated in the Daily Post that he was happy with his wages and was sure employers would pay more if they could afford to do so. He felt the Union was too expensive, with subscriptions of 20/- a year for men and 11/- for women and boys. Despite such feelings, the Union did become more active and a large union meeting decided to submit a log of claims and give the Housewives' Union a list of shops which employed union labour. The log shows the Union accepted that women earned less than men, though asked for more than the 50% of men's wages which was

1 Daily Post 8 February, 25 March 1913
2 Clipper 30 September 1899; Daily Post 11 May 1911
3 Daily Post 11 May 1911
4 Daily Post 28 October 1910
5 Daily Post 17 May, 21 June, 23 September 1911
6 Daily Post 15, 18 June 1912
7 Daily Post 24 June 1912
8 Daily Post 3, 11 July 1912
sometimes paid. The *Daily Post* did not report any outcome of this and no Wages Board was reported by 1914.

**Log of claims submitted by the Hobart branch of the Shop Assistants' Union, 1912**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position</th>
<th>Male wage</th>
<th>Female wage</th>
<th>Female wage as % of male wage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Buyer</td>
<td>£4/10/-</td>
<td>£3/10/-</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>£3</td>
<td>£2/2/-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Office assistant</td>
<td>£3</td>
<td>£2/3/-</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant under 15</td>
<td>7/6</td>
<td>5/-</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assistant under 20</td>
<td>£2/10/-</td>
<td>£1/15/-</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: *Daily Post* 17 July 1912

Another scattered group of workers were hotel and restaurant staff. In 1911 branches of the Hotel, Club, Restaurant and Caterers' Employees Union were formed in Hobart and Launceston and heard astonishing disclosures about wages; some waitresses were working 80 hours for 10/- a week.1 Nothing is reported to have been achieved by 1914, however. At least one woman was active in the Union's affairs, for in 1912 the *Daily Post* reported the death of Miss Pollard, one of the first members, who always took 'an active part in the business'.2

Clerks too were long regarded as underpaid and politically inactive; an attempt to form a union in 1904 failed, but the *Clipper* sporadically urged action.3 In August 1912 Clerks' Unions were formed in Hobart and Launceston.4 Later the *Daily Post* deplored the low pay and of clerks, especially females, only possible because of the unorganised state of women workers and the absence of legislative protection. A call for a Clerks' Wages Board was defeated in the Legislative Assembly.5 In a bid to attract women, all lady clerks and typists were invited in 1913 to a meeting presided over by Bishop Mercer (presumably to give the required degree of respectability) at which the Union's aims were explained. A meeting in Launceston was told many clerks held back from joining from fear of dismissal.6 Clearly the union was not successful in gaining wide membership and was ineffectual; until 1914 there was no regulation of clerks' salaries.7

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1 *Daily Post* 23 August, 8 September 1911, 4 July 1912
2 *Daily Post* 29 August 1912
3 For example *Daily Post* 24 June 1913, 12 July, 18 October 1912
4 *Daily Post* 18 October, 7 August 1912
5 *Daily Post* 7 November 1912, 20 June 1913, 11 December 1912
6 *Daily Post* 14, 20, 26 June 1913
7 *Daily Post* 28 May 1914 (unsuccessful attempt at legislation to permit a clerks' Wages Board)
Several other unions could have covered women workers but made little or no mention of them. Even in 1912 the *Daily Post* commented there were few women in unions and that better industrial organisation of women workers was necessary as they were exploited and helpless. When the Katzes left Tasmania in 1914 Woods said he had hoped Mrs Katz would take up the organisation of working women. Alicia Katz was popular, a good organiser and a competent speaker, and while she was in Tasmania she had supported male unions and been instrumental in establishing the Housewives' Union. Why had she not tried to organise working women already? Possibly there was apathy among women to union activity, caused by a dislike of moving outside the usual environment of home and workplace, or a fear that it was not acceptable for women to do so, or a lack of enthusiasm caused by years of hard work. The *Daily Post* claimed girls expected to marry and regarded work as temporary, so did not show 'the keen desire that men have for an improvement of their situation'. However, although the union movement paid lip service to the encouragement of women's union activity, little real effort was made to do so; the exception is Woods' activity with jam workers, which was successful. There is no evidence that unions opposed activity by women, though as this was so limited any possible opposition had no need to eventuate. The unions were mainly concerned with males' conditions - preference to married men was urged at one stage - and did little to assist women, and it could be that Alicia Katz' inactivity was due to discouragement or at least lack of interest from union leaders (Woods being more a theoretician than an actual unionist). Probably women's apathy and union disinterest combined to produce such a marked lack of activity by women in trade unions.

In 1912, however, an attempt was made to form a union among another group of women. On Woods' initiative, a Housewives' Union was formed in Hobart, similar to those already formed overseas. Woods stated its aims were to protect housewives' interests by encouraging the recognition of women's place on hospital and school boards, and to assist the Labour cause by encouraging women to deal with those who advertised in the *Daily Post*. Alicia Katz in the chair was more idealistic, saying the Union would defend Labor ideals and fight for the solidarity of the Labor movement, as well as pressing.

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1 *Daily Post* 11 May 1911 (Amalgamated Workers' Association), 27 October 1910 (Boot Trade Union), 12 January 1911 Railway Employees' Association
2 *Daily Post* 9 November 1912
3 *Daily Post* 26 January 1914
4 *Daily Post* 24 May 1910
5 *Daily Post* 13 February 1912

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women's interests. The *Daily Post* saw the Union as similar in domestic affairs to men's unions in industrial affairs, and prophesied political action. Housewives, however, were in a different position; their goals and therefore the action needed to achieve results were less obvious, they were scattered and more difficult to organise, and many did not sympathise with the Labor movement, so only a small percentage with little power to stage effective boycotts joined the Union. Moreover housewives did not have industrial workers' powerful weapon, the strike.

Nevertheless, the Union began enthusiastically, stated its aims as preserving democratic ideals and united action on questions concerning women, and organised social activities and classes in domestic economy. An advertisement claimed it secured substantial benefits for members but did not state how this was achieved. A branch was established in Launceston, where members heard addresses, held mock elections and social activities, raised funds for the Labor party and did 'good [presumably political] work...among the people'. Through 1913 the Hobart branch flourished, with 226 members (a far cry from Woods' projected ten thousand, but still a substantial number). It established a club where women could meet, chat and rest. In 1914, however, the club split from the Union and was soon defunct. The Hobart branch reported a growth in membership and Woods told members of their power as an auxiliary in the struggle for social and economic justice. He saw its aims as self-help in an atmosphere of 'true brotherhood' and 'the joyous task of creating a world surpassing fair'.

Despite the rhetoric the Union achieved little. In 1914 activity was confined to social gatherings and fund raising, with a little political action. The short-lived club had a more definite aim and spoke of reducing the price of bread and milk, but gave no clue as to how this was to be achieved. The Union received no support from most Tasmanian housewives and did not have the numbers to be effectual, nor did it have the clear, achievable objectives which would have encouraged positive action. It was, however, an attempt to organise Tasmanian housewives, and the fact that some hundreds joined shows that some were interested in asserting themselves and improving the position of women. Still, once in the Union, they did little to assert themselves, making no effort, for example, to speak on

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1 *Daily Post* 17, 20 June 1912; NS 139/5/1
2 *Daily Post* 9 July 1912
3 NS 139/5/1; *Daily Post* 16, 18 July, 2 August 1912
4 *Daily Post* 29 June 1912, 15 August, 15 September, 26 April 1913, 25 May, 4 August 1914
5 NS 139/5/3; *Daily Post* 15 February, 17 July, 2 August 1913
6 *Daily Post* 21, 24, 28 February, 13 March, 27 March 1914 (numbers), 13 February 1914 (Woods)
7 NS 139/5/2 passim (Minute book of the Housewives' Union)
8 *Daily Post* 21 February 1914

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municipal matters or enable women to sit on hospital and school boards, as had been suggested.

Although women did little in unionism, they did support their menfolk in union activity. In July 1911 the Carters' and Drivers' Union in Hobart planned a strike, and although it was 'rare for a lady to deliver an address in the open air on the eve of a strike', a meeting was addressed by Alicia Katz, who appealed for the assistance of women for these deserving men who were trying to earn enough to keep their families. If women would show courage, fortitude and sympathy the just cause would win. The *Daily Post* described this as an enthusiastic and well-delivered speech.1 Once the strike began Alicia Katz was 'one of the most indefatigable workers in rousing the spirit of the men' and the men's wives marched through Hobart under a banner reading 'Help us fight for our little ones'. The three hundred women and children made a powerful appeal for public sympathy, said the *Post*; their garments spoke of poverty and the writer admired the pluck of these women who humbled their pride to walk through the streets. The Katz's held a meeting for strikers and their wives and mothers; Alicia Katz spoke of the strike from a woman's point of view and was frequently applauded. The strike ended successfully after several days.2

Similar female activity was shown when the Mt Lyell miners struck; the women were as willing to sacrifice and fight for freedom as the men. A women's meeting was held to explain the Union's coupon system, and in mid-October there was a mass meeting of 500 women with no men allowed; the women appeared to look on the meeting as a joke. There was one female speaker. A week later a more serious meeting of miners' wives was addressed by women (at least one a miner's wife) and urged to support the Union. By November the strike was over.3

The following year there was a threatened strike at the Tasmania Mine, and a meeting of 200 women was held. The warden's wife presided and women were urged to think of the consequences of a strike to their families. Possibly mine owners were attempting to avert the strike through the miners' wives, which would mean both sides of labour had now recognised the importance of women's influence on their men. The strike did not eventuate.4

The womenfolk of male unionists appear to have generally supported unions (women were active supporters of the AWU at Campbell Town, for example5) and been included in many union activities, especially the social events which were an important ingredient of unionism; for example, the Moina branch of the AMEA (miners' union) held sports and

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1 *Daily Post* 31 July 1911
2 *Daily Post* 1, 3 August 1911
3 *Daily Post* 27, 30 September, 2, 19, 26 October, 3 November, 9 December 1911
4 *Daily Post* 4, 7 November 1912
5 *Daily Post* 25 July 1910
included ladies' competitions for nail driving and needlethreading, then held a dance.¹ The Mount Farrell branch of this union thanked a Miss Yole for her help with the annual holiday, and a male speaker said unions must have the assistance of their ladies, one method of assistance being to remind husbands and brothers to pay their union subscriptions.² This minor and auxiliary role is probably a good measure of the place of women in the trade union movement in Tasmania.

¹ Daily Post 28 February 1912
² Daily Post 2 June 1911
Political Activity

Some women were interested in politics in the nineteenth century but until the 1890s no mention was made of their involvement; in 1891 even candidates' wives were noted as doing 'little here'. In 1895 the Sanitary Association and the WCTU canvassed in a Hobart municipal election (in which women could vote) and the Clipper thought the winner did so largely because of energetic lady workers; in 1899 a socialist-democrat candidate had a committee of 150 which included women. On the whole, however, women had little to do with politics until they were enfranchised in 1903. Even then, the majority of women remained apathetic. Probably typical was Florence Skemp, who 'like most of the district women, was quite uninterested in politics; she voted as her husband advised her and thought no more about it'. From 1903 there were many complaints of women's apathy to politics and voting; members of the Women's National Club were told that the vote had come unsought and even unwanted, though they must now accept responsibility about it. There were also frequent optimistic remarks that women were beginning to be interested in politics.

When women were enfranchised in 1903 the fear that they would not know how to use their vote prompted Jessie Rooke of the WCTU to form the non-party Women's Suffrage Association, to educate them in 'the simplest duties of citizenship'. This was similar to mainland groups, and there were three branches, in Hobart, Launceston and Devonport. Under Ida McAulay as president Hobart women were addressed by politicians of all parties, voting was explained and a mock election held. Though the Association was nominally non-party members were generally middle class and anti-Labor. One woman

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1 See, for example, PB Walker (ed) Prelude to Federation O.B.M., Hobart, 1976, p. 1
2 Tasmanian Mail 30 May 1891
3 Clipper 14 December 1895, 21 January 1899
4 JR Skemp Memories of Myrtle Bank Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 1952, p. 158
5 For example, Tasmanian Mail 1 May 1909, 19 February 1910, 30 January 1912; Mercury 25 September 1908
6 For example, Tasmanian Mail 4 April 1903, 31 March 1906, 8 May, 19 June 1909, 2, 30 May 1912, 27 March 1913, 9, 30 April 1914
7 Tasmanian Mail 19 September, 3, 24, 31 October, 7 November 1903; Mercury 18, 19 September 1903; NS 374/7, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Women's Suffrage Association
8 Betty Searle Silk & Calico: Class, Gender and the Vote Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1988, p. 85; NS 374/7, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Women's Suffrage Association; Walch's Almanac 1905 p. 325; Clipper 3 June 1905
9 Tasmanian Mail 19 September, 3, 24, 31 October, 7, 21 November 1903; NS 374/7; Clipper 8 April 1905
considered standing for parliament but withdrew; a Launceston woman commented the South must be relieved as the candidate was 'a little inclined to pugnacity'\(^1\) (clearly not an acceptable feminine characteristic).

The branches disagreed over proposed action\(^2\) and rhetoric such as McAulay's, that women should at the right moment 'throw the whole weight of our united voting power into the balance' to obtain important and wholesome social reforms,\(^3\) was no guide to actual activity. Nevertheless, McAulay felt many women had become more interested in politics through the Association. Dissention arose again in 1905 when a deputation presented the Prime Minister with resolutions opposing the deportation of Kanakas.\(^4\) McAulay felt this compromised the Association's non-party line and ceased to act as president; the Association became dominated by Emily Dobson and increasingly a support group for Senator Dobson's party.\(^5\) The only other such group noted in Tasmania was the Women's National Franchise Association at Zeehan in 1903;\(^6\) nothing is known of its activities.

Idealistic non-party groups, then were rare, and touched only a few women. Far more numerous were groups working to support political parties. The Labor party was established in Tasmania at about the same time as women were enfranchised, so from the beginning needed women's support, which grew gradually from 1903 to 1914. In 1903 the Workers' Political League formed branches and a women's branch was suggested: the \textit{Clipper} asked why, as existing branches were not for men only. From the start men and women worked together in political organisations.\(^7\) Several meetings for women were addressed by Labor speakers, but in the 1903 elections the \textit{Clipper} opined that few working women voted, and a midlands correspondent claimed that though she urged women to vote few did so, while the squatters drove all their womenfolk there.\(^8\) The \textit{Clipper} believed that the right-wing parties' success in persuading their women to vote lost Labor the election - 'it won't happen again'. It was difficult to reach women as few attended meetings and female canvassers noted women's apathy, but after this result the Labor party made considerable

\(^1\) \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 12 December 1903
\(^2\) NS 374/7, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Women's Suffrage Association
\(^3\) NS 374/7, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Women's Suffrage Association
\(^4\) NS 374/7, Annual Report of the Tasmanian Women's Suffrage Association; \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 11 February 1905. The Association changed its name to the Women's Political Association
\(^5\) \textit{Clipper} 11 February, 18 March, 8 April 1905; \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 3 June, 23 September 1905, 7 March, 9 May, 25 July 1908
\(^6\) \textit{Clipper} 23 May 1903
\(^7\) \textit{Clipper} 31 January, 18 April 1903
\(^8\) \textit{Clipper} 7, 28 November, 19 December 1903

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efforts to raise working women's consciousness. It was noted that west coast women were far ahead politically of other Labor women; they presented an address to King O'Malley.

In 1904 'Victorian lady organiser' Lilian Locke, a middle class Labor supporter, spoke at meetings, appealing to women to organise and vote Labor. Earnest, capable and attractive, she spoke ably, so gave Tasmanian women an example of an active, well-informed woman as well as encouragement to take part in politics. As a result, many new branches of the WPL were formed, with a women's branch at Queenstown; this folded in 1906. In the same year a candidate's wife established a ladies' canvassing committee, and in 1905 the Launceston WPL branch tried to organise women's vote and enrolled thirty female members. Women's involvement in politics was not, however, taken for granted, and a woman told the Clipper it was difficult for her to attend meetings as her parents insisted on her being chaperoned, and her escort would only allow her to attend meetings where other women were present. A more active note was struck by a writer urging housewives: 'Sisters, cheer up! There's a better time coming - when we fetch it.' A suggestion that Labor women hold drawing-room meetings like the National Association ladies was squashed: Labor women were bread-winners or bread-makers and had no time or money for such meetings. Their activity within WPL branches grew, however; from 1906 women sat on executive committees and Locke (now Mrs Locke-Burns) was Vice-President of one branch. In 1906 she was the first female delegate to a WPL state conference and was also the Tasmanian delegate at the Melbourne Labor Conference; she spoke at election campaigns in 1906 but she and her husband then went to Queensland.

No local Tasmanian women were prepared to play as active a role as Locke-Burns; more usual were Kate Moore, 'painstaking financial secretary', and Elsie Williams, 'pioneer lady secretary', who as vice-president had 'gone through a stormy session without having one of her rulings questioned'. Before the 1909 state election Moore asked in the Clipper for WPL branches to educate women members on the Labor platform, which few

1 Clipper 2 January 1904
2 Clipper 16 January 1904
3 Clipper 4 June, 30 July, 6 August 1904
4 Clipper 20, 27 August, 22 October 1904
5 Clipper 23 July 1904, 29 April, 7 October 1905
6 Clipper 2 September 1905
7 Clipper 26 August 1905
8 Clipper 22 July 1905
9 Clipper 3 February, 4 August, 10 March 1906
10 Clipper 15 September, 24 November 1906, 9 February 1907
11 Clipper 18 January, 4 July 1908

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understood. 'We need able women canvassers...we can be useful, particularly at election
time.' Her WPL branch offered a prize for the most practical suggestion as to how to make
the League more attractive to women and the Clipper facetiously suggested publishing
portraits of marriageable members. Moore won the prize but could only suggest a series of
talks.¹ Many Labor women canvassed, though the Clipper urged that women canvass more
- 'a woman who understands the platform and will go among other women is a jewel beyond
price' - as many women were only won over by the arguments of another woman.² An
article describing how to form a WPL branch stressed the special effort which should be
made to enrol women members, with cheaper subscriptions. A female secretary was a good
idea as women made excellent officers; the social side was important to attract members and
was best run by a ladies' committee, while a sewing class for the poor was 'a work that they
[women members] delight in'.³

By 1910 some local women were active in Labor politics. Fifteen of the 112 WPL
branches had female secretaries, one being Mrs AJ Raynor of Ellendale, 'much travelled,
well-read' with qualifications 'far beyond the average'.⁴ She had recently arrived from
England. Another active secretary was Agnes Young of Zeehan, who wrote a fervent letter
to the Daily Post to answer criticism by Caroline Morton.⁵ Other women wrote urging their
fellow women to vote and Emma Spratt contributed a poem:

Sister women of Tasmania
Rise, your country needs your aid...
Then arouse from sleep, my sisters,
Help our brothers in the fight...⁶

Women were seen, both by themselves and by men, as auxiliaries, assisting the real fighters,
men. Two women only addressed meetings, Mrs Darcy of Launceston and Mrs Raynor,
talented Labor enthusiast'. Many people, said Raynor, questioned the propriety of women
taking an active part in politics but she thought the sphere was essentially one for the
womanly woman, inasmuch as only through just laws could conditions be improved.
Rather illogically, she said she preferred to be thought unwomanly than shirk her duty in
aiding reform, and urged women to persuade their friends to vote.⁷ Another visitor said it

¹ Clipper 16, 30 May, 6, 13 June 1908
² Clipper 15 May, 3 July 1909
³ Clipper 14 August 1909
⁴ Daily Post 24 December 1910, 11 September 1909
⁵ Daily Post 15 February 1911
⁶ Daily Post 12 April 1910
⁷ Mercury 16 February 1912 (Mrs Darcy); Daily Post 23 February 1910 (Mrs Raynor)
was the large part women had in the Labor movement which had much to do with its success - though 'they may not seem to take any considerable part'.

The Labor movement in Tasmania was stimulated by Federal success and great effort was made for the 1912 state elections. By now women's political interest was taken for granted, and the Labor leader regularly began addresses: 'Laborites of Tasmania, Men and Women...'. A women's meeting in Hobart had an audience of over a thousand. The state platform had many planks concerning women (special maternity care, the protection of child life, equal pay) and the party claimed it was the natural one for women to support; it realised women's place was in the home and wanted to keep her there, with her husband earning a living wage. Miss H. Powell, a mainland Labor organiser, spoke to groups in many areas; for example, 120 people at the small, isolated country town of Hastings. Women's sphere, she said, was neither domestic nor public life alone, nor both together, but 'domestic life and public life for the sake of the personal inner life, purified and aggrandized by the ideal appropriation of the essential experience and progress of the whole world'. What did Hastings women make of this? A second woman speaker was Alicia Katz, wife of a mainland Labor organiser and the main woman to encourage women's participation in trade unions in Tasmania. She was competent and popular, explaining politics from a woman's standpoint and urging women to 'join the fight'.

Women's activity continued to grow; by 1914 four out of thirty-five delegates at the annual WPL conference were women and Mrs Raynor was the first woman on the state WPL executive. Though many local women worked hard - a Miss Holehan was described in 1913 as a very assiduous worker and canvasser for seven years, methodical, persistent, clever and effective - none became prominent. There was still some facetiousness about women's work, and even W. Woods, MHA, in thanking Miss Holehan, said that in view of the photographs of Labor candidates, her work must have been uninspiring at times. The growth in women's activity was evident in state and federal elections in 1913; there were more calls for women's support, more letters by women, and the women's column in the *Daily Post* was concerned with making women aware politically. Much idealistic language was used, with women urged to tear the brambles from their children's path. 'God has sent

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1. *Daily Post* 8 January 1912 (Mrs Dwyer)
2. *Daily Post* 7 September 1912
3. *Daily Post* 25 April 1912
4. *Daily Post* 23 September 1912, 6 June, 11 January 1913, 15 April 1912
5. *Daily Post* 2 February, 20, 26 March, 9 April, 22, 27 May, 13, 15 June 1912; speech, 10 June 1912
7. *Daily Post* 19 June, 10 July 1914
8. *Daily Post* 17 April 1913

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the Labor party', wrote 'A Woman' of Scottsdale, 'to save our beloved and sunny Australia'. Individual women, however, were still rarely prominent, though at Gormanson a Mrs Kelly, 'one of the active workers in the cause', chaired a meeting and gave a stirring call to women to throw aside indifference and work for the Party. Labor won three federal seats in Tasmania and the *Daily Post* gave much of the credit to 'women's help and backing'.

By 1914, though there were no female candidates and the party was dominated by men, women played an important, though still traditionally supportive feminine, role, not surprisingly given the views of male Labor supporters on the proper position of women. The *Daily Post* said that a notable feature since 1908 was the number of women brought into the Labor movement, mainly through membership of the WPL. Women voters were considered as important and intelligent as men and their presence at political meetings was taken for granted. That year Mrs Raynor stated at a public meeting that all social and economic subjects affected women more than men, though 'men were reasonable animals, if taken all right. (Laughter)'. Woman was 'bottom dog' and had 'fought hard enough'. It was no excuse to say women had no time to think. Labor was essentially a woman's movement, out to help her. Every woman had a place in politics; there were many ways she could make her influence felt. 'Never mind what their husbands said, let them think for themselves. (Applause)'. By 1914 women canvassed, sat on committees, were delegates, and were beginning to play a more public role by giving addresses. Perhaps the extent to which continued encouragement to women to assist Labor bore fruit is indicated in a letter from a woman servant, who excused her 'liberty' in writing to a politician by saying 'as I in my small way have done my utmost to help the Labor movement'.

Women also worked for non-Labor parties, though in separate, autonomous women's groups rather than in mixed groups as in the Labor party. Energetic Emily Dobson was one of the first mentioned; she canvassed shops and workrooms in aid of her husband, Senator Dobson, in 1903. Other women also canvassed, for the *Clipper* wrote sarcastically about ladies 'getting at' working class women - 'one shook hands with a shop girl, another

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1 *Daily Post* 11, 18 January, 16 May, 28, 29 June 1913
2 *Daily Post* 15 May (Mrs Darcy), 16 May (Mrs Kelly), 6 June 1913
3 *Daily Post* 9 November 1912
4 See for example *Daily Post* 21 May, 25 July 1914 (at a large election meeting where there were obviously women present there was no special mention of this in the newspaper report)
5 *Daily Post* 10 July 1914. What Raynor meant by saying women had fought hard enough is not clear, but the tone of her speech shows that women thought themselves more equal to men than in the past
6 *Daily Post* 8 August 1912
7 *Clipper* 19 December 1903
chatted to a dressmaker who nearly fainted with surprise'. In 1904 a women's branch of the right-wing National Association was formed in Hobart. By 1905 women's 'considerable interest and organising ability' was noted, and more branches were established. Meetings were addressed by women such as Lady Lewis, wife of a former premier and president of the women's division, and Miss Amy Chapman, the secretary, 'indefatigable and able' and a competent speaker (unlike Lady Lewis, 'not a very forcible speaker'). Mrs Kermode told women it was their duty to be educated in politics. Friends and family opposed her speaking publicly, but she felt duty to her convictions was her first principle. The women's branches had two aims: to educate women politically and persuade them to vote Conservative, and to provide a pool of canvassers. In 1906 many women canvassed in the state elections, though always in groups. 'Just let women keep this going, and their influence for good in the cleansing of political life will avail to much.' 'Russet' of the *Tasmanian Mail* did not agree; anti-Labor candidates, she wrote, had been defeated by too much canvassing on their behalf by women. Evidently the skill took some time to learn. In 1908 the Association was renamed the Progressive League, and its secretary, Mrs Mary Taylor (also secretary of the Women's National Club) represented Tasmania at a conference of anti-socialist women's clubs. A Women's National League also existed and held public meetings. In 1909, however, these various organisations disappeared as the Nationals fused with the Liberal-Protectionists to form the Liberal Party.

Meanwhile the Liberal-Protectionist women had taken over the earlier non-party Women's Political Association. Under Emily Dobson's leadership it decided to support only liberal and patriotic candidates of high principles and ability. Its stated objects were to increase loyalty and the spirit of true liberalism, raise the standard of public life, and improve the position of women, but its main activities were to hold meetings, debates and mock elections to put forward the Liberal view. A mock election was held to find the most

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1 *Clipper* 4 June 1904, 17 October 1903
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 9 April, 21 May, 3 September 1904
3 *Mercury* 10 July, 10 August 1905; *Clipper* 11 November 1905; *Tasmanian Mail* 25 February, 25 March, 1, 13 April 1905
4 *Clipper* 11 November 1905; *Mercury* 10 August 1905; *Tasmanian Mail* 26 June 1913 (Amy Chapman), 25 February, 15 April 1905
5 *Tasmanian Mail* 15 April 1905
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 24 March 1906; *Clipper* 3, 10 March 1906
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 7 April, 2 June, 4 August 1906
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 3 October, 1 February 1908
9 *Tasmanian Mail* 24 April, 1 May 1909
10 *Tasmanian Mail* 9 May, 25 July 1908

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desirable female candidate and questions formulated to ask candidates about women sitting on hospital, municipal and other boards. This association was the only political group which discussed questions specifically regarding women and aimed to improve their conditions, though it did little to put these aims into practice and in effect it only supported the male dominated Liberal organisation.

After the fusion of 1909 the Association became known as the Liberal League. Many branches were established and included prominent members of the earlier National Association. The League was remarkably active from 1912, when a national conference of 800 Liberal women was held in Hobart. Caroline Morton presided and Mary Taylor was secretary. Six female journalists (one Tasmanian) covered it and praised it highly: the delegates spoke splendidly and showed not only that women could think and speak intelligently and logically, but the importance the vote had given women. A Congregationalist clergyman said the conference showed women could really be useful in politics, 'the sunbeams of the world and a glory to their sex'. The Daily Post, however, criticised the conference; the women had no practical aims but wished to educate women about the vote, keep homes pure and the country free, prosperous and God-fearing, and thought they could do it from behind the scenes. They were out of touch with reality. On a picnic, after partaking of 'substantial refreshments', the women sat on hay bales and sang a parody of 'John Brown's Body': 'We'll hang Andrew Fisher on the sour apple tree'. The Post was scornful; this undignified behaviour was like a football team's, and if Labor women acted in such a way the conservative press would see it as irresponsible. The Mercury, however, reported the picnic fully and included no criticism of behaviour unthinkable for ladies in earlier decades. The incident illustrates how far codes of behaviour for women had been relaxed, and also that Liberal women, treating politics as rather a game, were not yet ready for serious political activity. The conference did, however, demonstrate women's powers of organisation and oratory, even if it did not result in any particular platform or program.

The result of the conference was to increase women's participation in Liberal campaigns, supporting male leaders and candidates. Women canvassed enthusiastically in the state election that year, and after two large rallies in Launceston membership increased from 100 to 1000. Women were also asked to act as scrutineers - 'the work is very simple', wrote Mary Taylor, in an apparent effort to attract women. Later the Daily Post criticised

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1 Tasmanian Mail 4 May, 25 July, 1 August, 5 September, 17, 24 October, 14 November 1908
2 Tasmanian Mail 11, 25 January, 1, 8 February 1912; Mercury 29 January, 15 February 1912
3 Daily Post 25, 27 January 1912
4 Daily Post 30 January, 25 April 1912; Mercury 29, 30 January 1912
5 Tasmanian Mail 14 March, 18 April 1912; Mercury 27 April 1912; Daily Post 11 June 1912

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the Liberal League for advertising for young lady canvassers. Were these women to be paid and with whose money? And why ‘young’? asked the Post; this was an ignoble use of young ladies, whose mission was to delude and frighten women.1 In 1913 the Post called such canvassers ‘mendacious and beguiling’, coming to poor homes only at election times, warm and comfortable in furs and motors.2 Again there is the suggestion of a game for these women.

The Liberal League was proud of its women’s work. The secretary of the Hobart branch described canvassing as heavy, wholehearted work. In 1912 the League had 800 women canvassers, in 1913, 2288, ‘closely banded together under leaders with whom we have passed through two campaigns and who learned to trust each other’.3 At the Federal election the women worked enthusiastically; ‘the men let them do practically all the hard work of canvassing and hustling round’.4 The Launceston branch was the largest women’s branch in Australia and a Girls’ Liberal League was established in 1914, as well as a lounge and club for adult members.5 Still, when a senator addressed the branch he chose his words to suit his audience, women ‘not yet being educated to too much technicality’.6

Anti-Labor politics therefore gave many women a chance to enter public life to varying degrees and embrace a cause with fervour; many enjoyed political activity enormously.7 The leaders were well-educated women of middle-class background, like Emily Dobson, Amy Chapman and Caroline Morton. Thousands of women were involved; places as small as Sandfly sustained branches and total membership was probably considerable. More women were probably involved with anti-Labor than Labor politics; the middle class supported the Liberals and their women had the education, assurance and spare time to enter public life. Non-Labor politics provided more women speakers, both because these women had educational advantages, and because it was easier for women to address all-women branches than the mixed groups of the Labor party. In both parties, however, women did much the same work, mainly canvassing and organising social events, acting as auxiliaries of men, who dominated politics.

The Liberal League was pleased that the party had ‘no rabid feminine politicians’,8 and only one Tasmanian woman stood for parliament before 1914: Tasmanian-born Alicia

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1 Daily Post 4, 18 September 1912
2 Daily Post 25 March, 16 May, 24 June 1913
3 Daily Post 14 June 1913
4 Tasmanian Mail 18 December 1913
5 Tasmanian Mail 10 July 1913, 26 February 1914
6 Tasmanian Mail 13 June 1912
7 Tasmanian Mail 27 March 1913
8 Tasmanian Mail 7 March 1912
O'Shea Petersen. She belonged to various women's groups (and won the Women's Political Association's mock election) and had long been interested in politics. In the 1912 federal election she stood for Denison, the only independent candidate in Tasmania. There were many factors against her victory: the seat was marginal, sentiment was strongly polarised between the Labor party, victorious in 1910, and the new Liberals, desperate to gain government, and she was a woman. With a first-past-the-post system both parties opposed a third candidate. Nevertheless, Petersen was an unusual candidate without a reported coherent platform or interest in women's issues. She had difficulty finding chairmen for her meetings, which were described as 'humorous', and newspaper reports make her appear like a community joke; she was widely regarded as eccentric. She claimed the vote of all women, but almost all voted along party lines and Petersen received 1.5% of the 16,801 votes. Although the jocular tone of the newspapers can be ascribed to the desire by male reporters to put down a female candidate, the small number of votes, the difficulty in finding a chairman and the unusual sayings of Petersen indicate that few people regarded her as a serious candidate. In conservative Tasmania only a woman with Petersen's self-confidence and toughness could have coped with the difficult situation of being the first female candidate, as well as being considered rare entertainment. There were no more female candidates for some time, though a clergyman, hardly a radical, said in a sermon that it was only a matter of application for a woman to be returned. Had a woman campaigned on a platform of women's rights she could have polled better, as did Vida Goldstein in Victoria, but Tasmania had no comparable woman. Possibly the influence of Locke, Katz and Dobson, who all believed firmly that women's interests could best be served by supporting mainstream parties not separate women candidates, helped prevent such an occurrence. In Tasmania the only attempts to remove women's vote from party interests were by the early Women's Suffrage Association and occasional newspaper correspondents who wrote generally (and ineffectively) that 'the aim of women in politics should be the physical, moral and spiritual uplifting of the race'; both had little impact on the great majority of women, who voted according to class not gender.

1 Daily Post 1, 2, 8, 15 May 1913; interview with Eric Waterworth, Margate, 2 October 1989
2 Daily Post 15 May, 23 June 1913
3 Mercury 29 January 1912
4 See Searle pp. 59-76
5 Locke: Searle pp. 39-58; Katz: Daily Post 6 February 1912
6 Mercury 10 February 1912
Intellectual and social activity

In 1840 Lady Franklin was appalled at the lack of intellectual interests among women and girls,¹ and there is no evidence that the situation altered markedly for thirty years. In the 1870s and 1880s, however, girls' education began to include more intellectual content and it became increasingly accepted that women could have intellectual interests. Some Tasmanian women formed societies; in the 1870s the female members of the Clarke and Walker families belonged to various groups called 'Pollies' which discussed poetry and literature,² and attended the Rev. Clarke's regular Symposiums, at which papers were read, new books and ideas discussed, and any interesting diversion like thought-reading indulged in.³ In 1889 the Clarke girls formed a short-lived literary society.⁴ Some took a more informal interest; in 1896 Alix of the Mail mentioned that she and a friend were going to spend the afternoon in the bush with a billy and scones and discuss Fiske's *Cosmic Philosophy* and similar books.⁵

Literary clubs existed in the 1870s but women were 'not to the fore' in them; a woman wrote a paper in 1879 but a man read it to the society.⁶ In the late 1880s a governor's vigorous wife, Lady Hamilton, determined to encourage intellectual activity, and invited twenty young women to join the (rather condescendingly named) Nil Desperandum Literary Society.⁷ Sarah Walker said the members were a 'funny mixture' - did Lady Hamilton include women from outside the elite? - but the meetings seemed a success.⁸ Topics discussed included Strikes, Russia, and 'Woman; her work and influence'. In 1892 the Society was described as useful, as it was excellent for women to write and speak: 'women must prepare for anything in this age of transition'.⁹ Lady Hamilton also formed a reading group; at the first meeting poems by Tennyson were read and women discussed how to pronounce 'idyll', easier than discussing the poems' meaning. There were few members,

¹ NP 1/17 28 April 1840
² UTA W 9/8/1 10 September 1879, W 9/11/4(1) 26 October 1881; Beatrice Travers attended French, German and English Pollies (K 9/6.2 20 June 1879, 16 January, 13 May 1880); *Tasmanian Mail* 30 July 1892
³ UTA W 9/3/1.4 31 December 1884, W 9/11/2(1) 30 October 1889; PB Walker (ed) *Prelude to Federation* OBM, Hobart, 1976, p. 33
⁴ UTA W 9/11/4(1) 10 July 1889
⁵ Undated letter at Summerhome by Minnie Clarke; *Tasmanian Mail* 22 August 1895
⁶ NS 499/235; Peter Bolger *Hobart Town* Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973 p. 319
⁷ Agnes M. Morris *Lady Hamilton's Tasmania* the Author, Hobart, 1966, pp. 11, 16-21; *Tasmanian Mail* 26 July 1890
⁸ UTA W 9/11/4(1) 7 August 1889
⁹ *Tasmanian Mail* 20 September, 20 December 1890, 13 August 1892
as another club had existed 'so long' with fifty members;¹ possibly the Hobart Town Reading Club, a well-organised women's society whose members undertook to read for at least half an hour a day.² In 1892 the Australian Home Reading Union established circles for men and women in Hobart and Launceston, and these were popular until about 1896 - 'all the literary girls are going for it'.³ The circles lasted longer in Launceston, where there were no literary societies.⁴ There was criticism that time spent by women in reading circles was wasted with no knowledge gained, and if it was, it was unnecessary.⁵ From one circle grew a second literary society, the Itinerants; the twenty members read one paper a year and discussed it, afterwards partaking of afternoon tea, a mixture of intellectual stimulation and social interaction typical of most women's societies of the period. Members included Maud Montgomery, Ida McAulay who gave papers on topics such as Women's Suffrage and Mars, and Lucy Hudspeth, who had the ability to write a clever paper in the intervals of a morning's housework.⁶

Alix wrote in 1892 that she had never known Hobart so literary⁷ and in 1895 described middle-class women's activity: balls and entertainments in summer, literary clubs and lectures in winter.⁸ Over the years several literary societies were founded.⁹ Most were ephemeral and only ones to last were the Hamilton, Itinerants and the Amateur Writers' Club (1906), whose members included those who wrote for profit; there was an emphasis on original works.¹⁰ There were fewer literary societies outside Hobart, though some did exist,

¹ Tasmanian Mail 20 September, 11 October 1890
² UTA RS 131/23, Rules of the Hobart Town Reading Club
³ Tasmanian Mail 19 March 1892, 2 March, 15 June 1895; Bolger p. 319
⁴ Tasmanian Mail 31 July 1897
⁵ Tasmanian Mail 15 June 1895
⁶ NS 331/1-3; C. Alexander 'The Itinerants - A Ladies' Literary Society', in THRA Papers and Proceedings no 32, vol 4, pp. 146-150; W 9/11/7(1) 2 May 1890; Tasmanian Mail 22 May 1897, 23 April 1898, 21 October 1899
⁷ Tasmanian Mail 30 July 1892
⁸ Tasmanian Mail 15 June 1895
⁹ St David's Literary Society (Tasmanian Mail 11 June 1892); Shakespeare Society (Tasmanian Mail 27 August 1892); Shakespeare circle (Tasmanian Mail 30 October 1897); YWCA Literary and Debating Club (Tasmanian Mail 8 September 1900, Clipper 2 November 1901); University Literary and Debating Club (Tasmanian Mail 18 May 1901); Shakespeare Society (Tasmanian Mail 6 August 1904, Walch's Almanac 1902 p. 307); Prose and Poetry Recital Society 1910 (Tasmanian Mail 11, 18 June, 6 October 1910)
¹⁰ Originally the Tasmanian Amateur Press Club: Tasmanian Mail 13 April 1907, 15 August, 10 October 1908, 10, 24 April, 12 June, 10 July, 14 August, 14 September 1909. Later the literary circle of the Lyceum Club: Tasmanian Mail 20 November 1913, 2 April 1914

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for example the Zeehan Ladies' Shakespeare Society, the Penghana Shakespeare Club and a
literary club in Devonport. There were probably more; Ruth Tinning recollected that a
country neighbour, Miss S., held monthly literary afternoons for women and older girls.
Someone would read a paper and Miss S. would preside at a lavish afternoon tea. There
were also less formal groups, such as that Ida McAulay belonged to, where six women met
at each other’s houses to discuss subjects such as ‘what the woman of the immediate future
is likely to be’.

One attendant at literary meetings found the discussion dull and unoriginal, with
members only becoming animated at the mention of a baby, and Ida McAulay was surprised
at the ignorance of other Itinerants on the subject of Atoms and found several papers
‘nothing out of the ordinary’. In 1910 a woman resident in Tasmania for two years, Mrs
Fereday, praised literary societies. She attended meetings (probably of the Amateur Writers’
Club) and found the work produced ‘almost, without exception, extremely good’ and the
amount of talent ‘very surprising’. Although the level of performance varied, therefore,
there was certainly enthusiasm among many middle-class Tasmanian women to at least
appear interested in intellectual matters, and an interest in the changing position of women
was obviously a subject of discussion among them.

An interest in science, particularly botany, was found relatively frequently among
educated Tasmanian women all during the nineteenth century: seaweed collections in
particular were popular with some examples sent to Europe. Lady Franklin encouraged
scientific interests: with her husband she formed the Tasmanian Natural History Society
of which two other women were members, but she had less success in encouraging women’s
interest in general. Most women’s education had been too limited to stimulate academic
interest. After the Franklins’ departure the Society (now the Royal Society) had few female

1 *Tasmanian Mail* 19 June 1909, 16 February 1911, 22 January 1914; NS 325/8A
2 Ruth Tinning *Backward Glances* the Author, Montagu Bay, 1979, pp. 24-25
3 NS 1077/4 6 November 1897, NS 1077/5 16 April 1898
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 23 October 1897
5 NS 1077/4 19 July, 10 August; NS 1077/6 19 June 1899
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 6 October 1910
7 For example, Charlotte Lempiere collected ferns and seaweed at Port Arthur, (M. Glover ‘Women and
Children at Port Arthur’ in *THRA Papers and Proceedings* vol 32, no 2, p. 63), Mrs Sharland collected and
sent pressed algae to the 1851 Exhibition (Exhibition MDCCCLI Catalogue vol 2, p. 995, Tasmaniana
Library) and Eliza Cox sent some to the British Museum (*Life at Clarendon: the reminiscences of Cornelia
and Rosa Cox* National Trust [Tasmania], Launceston, 1988, pp. 7, 12, 19)
8 Alison Alexander *Governors’ Ladies* THRA, Hobart, 1987, pp. 101-102; *Tasmanian Journal of Science*
Hobart, vol 1, no I [p. 240], vol 1, no IV [p. 320], vol II, no VI [p. 160] (pages are not all numbered)
members, though in the 1850s Catherine Jackson was a member, and five women sent
displays to the 1851 Exhibition. A few more female members joined in the 1880s and
Louisa Ann Meredith was elected one of three honorary members.1 Women's interest in
science increased generally in the 1890s: in 1892 the Science Association held a congress
and two papers were read by women, while 'the women of Hobart rolled up to hear the
papers', wrote J.B.Walker; 'it was quite the fashion to go to the meetings'.2 Some women
attended interstate congresses in 1898 and 1899,3 and the first paper by a woman was read to
the Royal Society.4 In 1904 the Tasmanian Natural Science Society was formed for women,
for the study of Tasmanian fauna, flora and conchology; members collected these and wrote
and read papers. At one 'usual meeting' three women read papers and a discussion
followed.5 Even so, in 1910 a resident commented that 'the scientific woman here [in
Tasmania] is scarce'. Ten of the 155 female university students took at least some scientific
subjects; five gained B.Sc. degrees and two M.Sc., though all appeared to become teachers
rather than practising scientists.6

Women joined many other intellectual societies established in the 1900s;7 by now
such groups automatically included women. Many were ephemeral, but their formation
shows a growing interest in various intellectual areas, particularly in Hobart where most of
these groups were formed. The reason for Hobart's predominance was probably that there
were stationed the outsiders who with their wives formed many societies (for example, the
Anglican bishop and the governor), while among the womenfolk of men who worked in
Hobart (civil servants, merchants, university staff, other professionals) were many of the

1 Transactions of the Royal Society Tasmania vol II pp. 162, 490-492; Papers and Proceedings, and Report,
of the Royal Society of Tasmania for 1881 p. xii, 1883 pp. 7, 8, 9, 10
2 Tasmanian Mail 9 January 1892, 16, 23 January 1892
3 NS 1077/5 1 January 1898; Tasmanian Mail 16 December 1899
4 Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania for the years 1898-1899 p. iv
5 Tasmanian Mail 17, 24 September 1904, 25 February, 1 April 1905, 26 May 1906, 6 July 1907
6 UTA, University of Tasmania yearbooks, examination results, 1895-1914
7 Social Science Circle (Tasmanian Mail 4 June, 6 October 1910; Daily Post 11 April 1914); Ethical
Society (Tasmanian Mail 14 November 1908); Theosophical Society (Walch's Almanac 1902 p. 308);
Freedom League (Daily Post 28 February 1914); Hobart Peace Society (Mercury 2 March 1907, Daily Post
21 April 1911, Walch's Almanac 1912 p. 332); Alliance Française (Tasmanian Mail 20 July 1907, 11 June
1910, 5 June 1905); a similar German society (Tasmanian Mail 25 May 1911, 4 December 1913); Esperanto
Society (Tasmanian Mail 25 May 1907); Psychic Research and Psychology Club (Tasmanian Mail 11 June
1910, 3 June, 2 December 1905; Tasmanian Field Naturalists' Club (The Tasmanian Naturalist vol 1, no 2
September 1907 pp. 11, 14; Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Easter Camp-out 1909 [TC P 570.6 TAS]
shows many women in a photograph of a group of members, and the camp-out included women)
societies' members. Many societies had joint members, shown when the Amateur Writers' Club changed the date of a meeting as it clashed with the Social Science Circle to which many of its members belonged.¹

Though women's societies only flourished from the 1890s, listening to lectures (a more passive activity) had been an accepted feminine activity from the earliest period: Eliza Arthur was present at the first lecture at the Mechanics' Institute in 1829, Lady Franklin attended many lectures and even unintellectual Lady Denison went to one.² Pastor Chiniquy delivered anti-Catholic diatribes in 1879 and although trouble was expected many women attended, 'chaperoned by male friends'.³ As women's organisations multiplied from the 1890s women attended many lectures on many different topics. It would appear that at first mainly upper-class women attended, though possibly only their activities were reported; by the 1880s women of all classes attended lectures with Lady Hamilton lecturing 'poor women' on Nursing and her ambulance lectures in 1889 attracting seventy women from 'all classes'.⁴ Even in the 1840s it is probable that a wide range of women attended Temperance lectures, for example.

At first all lecturers were men, and Eliza Arthur refused even to take the chair at one meeting in the 1830s.⁵ The first known female lecturer was a Mrs Thomas in 1857, who lectured on temperance, and caused an agitated letter to the press saying woman's place was in the family, and if she were transferred to public life the whole fabric of social life would be destroyed.⁶ By the 1870s female lecturers, still uncommon, did not cause such agitation.⁷ A number of women lectured in the 1880s; Lady Hamilton made many speeches, and Beatrice Butler clearly though this unnerving; 'rather an ordeal I should think'.⁸ By the 1890s female speakers were no longer a rarity, as the many women's organisations (particularly the WCTU) provided platforms for speakers and encouraged, if not forced, local women to make speeches. Some Tasmanians, such as Emily Dobson and Amy Chapman, gained reputations as good speakers.⁹ By 1914 women speakers were accepted, though condescending comparisons with males continued to be made in the press. In 1908 Annie Besant enthralled large audiences with her oratory, 'which was, for a woman,
superb', and in 1911 a female lecturer showed that 'learning and feminine charm can blend together'.

Though many females who joined societies and attended lectures were adult, the groups were also seen as excellent for girls who had left school, and in 1908 Aquila of the Mail reported a Hobart society belle's remark that she did not believe in entertainments in winter, as girls should improve their minds, and have something to talk about in summer. Such a comment shows a considerable change in attitude from that of twenty or thirty years before, when intellectual interests were confined to a few women, or the previous decades when women were not expected to have them at all. The membership of these societies was, however, confined to the middle and upper classes, those who had been educated at private colleges and who had the leisure time to attend meetings and pursue interests. No working-class women are mentioned at any meeting. The president of the Zeehan Shakespeare Society was the wife of the Anglican clergyman and other members were probably the wives and daughters of the local elite, the mine manager, doctor, and other professional men, and the position of the local upper-class is shown in the comment by the Anchor mine's manager's son that his father ran all the local men's organisations and his mother all the women's.

There were some professional groups, which have been described under the appropriate profession, and some groups which aimed to enable women to assist each other, though none appeared to achieve this. The Australasian Women's Association had branches in Hobart and Launceston from 1909. Its specific aims were never stated, but members heard lectures (for example, Frances Edwards on Child Neglect), dissented strongly when a Melbourne speaker slighted women's associations and said women were fit only for social functions, had a system of medical benefits, discussed stray dogs and harder sentences for habitual drunkards, and held functions such as dances. Members probably enjoyed their meetings but had little impact on the general community.

The International Council of Women was founded in America in 1888 to promote liaison between women's organisations. In 1899 the president asked the Tasmanian governor if the state could be represented at an international congress in London. Mrs

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1 Tasmanian Mail 22 August 1908, 3 August 1911
2 Tasmanian Mail 6 June 1908
3 Tasmanian Mail 3 August 1911 (the minister’s wife was also president of the Mothers’ Union and the Girls’ Friendly Society); Brian Lewis Sunday at Kooyong Road Hutchinson, Melbourne, 1976, p. 10
4 Walch’s Almanac 1909 p. 339; Daily Post 9 February, 4 April, 15 August 1910, 21 February 1912, 9 February, 2 May 1911; Tasmanian Mail 10 July 1909
Dodds, wife of the Administrator, circularised all Tasmanian women's organisations; 33 answered and 25 affiliated to form a Tasmanian branch of the National Council of Women. With such origins the Council was bound to be an organisation of the elite; the governor's wife presided, the vice-presidents included the bishop's wife, mayoresses and other wives of prominent men. The Council aimed to unite women's societies and lessen antagonism between them, and there was much talk about other aims. 'Wherever there is a little child neglected, a home comfortless, a girl astray, a man inebriated, a city insanitary, a mind left uncultivated, a willing hand left idle for want of hiring, there is need for a National Council of Women', said Caroline Morton in 1904, and the *Tasmanian Mail* echoed this sentiment: 'May the good at last vanquish all evil and touch perfection'. Emily Dobson said vaguely that 'such a meeting, of earnest women, must result in good', but the Council did never explained how this was to be done or how affiliated bodies were to use it: it had no provision for action and most of its meetings were taken up with administrative details. It held annual meetings at which each affiliated society made a report, but that was all, and its minutes include such statements as 'not much business was transacted as there was not much to do'. The Council's work, said the *Mercury* in 1904, 'has scarcely sustained the grandiloquence of their title'. It is not surprising that some associations, seeing no advantage in it, refused to join the Council, and others withdrew.

Far from lessening antagonism, the Council increased it. In 1903 it was criticised: brief discussions where everyone was afraid of hurting others meant it was 'not of much use or interest'. This changed. In 1905 there was 'a bit of a scramble' for the presidency; Dobson tried to resign, the southern executive threatened to resign if she did, the northern branch passed a vote of confidence in her, and she remained, but north-south tension was obvious. Then Jessie Rooke apparently tried to pressure a WCTU delegate into resigning so she could take her place, and a full-scale north-south row erupted, with considerable crossing-out of minutes, 'foolish bickering', and a public accusation that Dobson exercised autocratic power. The argument died down, but in 1906 Dobson was accused of tampering

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1 TC P 396.09946 HIS; *Tasmanian Mail* 20 May 1899
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 12 August, 21 October 1899, 10 March 1904
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 23 December 1899
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 4 May 1901, 16 March, 10 May, 27 September 1902
5 *Mercury* 16 March 1904
6 NS 325/8A 1 March 1906; *Tasmanian Mail* 14 July 1900
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 7 March 1903
8 NS 325/8A 3 March, 18 April, 12 August, 17 November 1905; *Tasmanian Mail* 18, 25 March 1905

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with reports before publication, though she remained president and was elected Australian president that year, retaining both positions until well after 1914.¹

Annual conferences were unproductive of results; for example, in 1912 a paper on equal moral standards for men and women was read, and Dobson closed discussion by commenting that it was a subject one did not like to talk on.² Possibly this caution resulted from action in 1910, when she appealed for a crusade to stop immorality. 'B.R.' of the West Coast criticised her 'impertinence...the cool assumption that immorality only exists in the ranks of the workers and artisans'.³ Mrs Hannaford's remark that working class girls should not dress above their station but wear nice washing material also drew criticism. 'Class impudence', said 'Mother' of Huonville; 'haughty arrogance to the workers', wrote 'Sister' of Hobart. 'No doubt the N.C.W. would like to see every worker wear uniforms and respectfully curtsey every time they had the honor and privilege of meeting their superiors. If women would publicly speak of only what they really understand there would not be so much ill class feeling engendered'.⁴ By 1910 working-class women had a voice and upper-class ladies could not escape criticism.

From 1910 the Council did attempt limited activity, holding some public meetings and encouraging bush nursing, kindergartens and the formation of an anti-plumage society, which last did come into being through its initiative.⁵ Overall achievement, however, was limited, and probably only Dobson's energy and the fact that she was either president or a prominent member of most of the affiliated societies, who could not therefore withdraw, kept the Council going in the face of its palpable lack of achievement (note that the the Council failed in South Australia⁶). Dobson believed fervently in the Council, but from it she obtained the prestigious positions of state and national president and the chance to travel overseas to conferences almost every year (albeit at her own expense).⁷

Another upper-class women's organisation was the Victoria League, established in Britain in 1901 and in Tasmania in 1903 by Mrs Stourton, wife of a wealthy landowner. ('There are so many leagues!' was the Mail 's comment.)⁸ By 1914, after considerable

¹ NS 325/8A 1906; Mercury 7 June 1934
² Daily Post 16 March 1912
³ Daily Post 19, 24 February 1910; Tasmanian Mail 26 February 1910
⁴ Daily Post 24, 28 February 1910
⁵ Tasmanian Mail 26 February, 5 March, 2 July 1910, 21 March 1912
⁶ Susan Magarey Unbridling the Tongues of Women Hale & Iremonger, Sydney, 1985, p. 187
⁷ Mercury 7 June 1934; Tasmanian Mail 17 April 1909; trips: Daily Post 15 March 1912, 21 February 1913, 14 January 1914
⁸ TCP 369.2946 VIC; Tasmanian Mail 4 October 1902, 2 May 1903
effort by Stourton, twelve branches had been formed.1 The League aimed to encourage Empire sentiment and its members were the wives of the wealthy. The organisation, with a more specific aim than the NCW, achieved more. It held an annual essay competition for children, sent books and royal portraits to schools, formed a committee to welcome new settlers (though no activity was reported) and was responsible for the Empire Day movement in Tasmania.2 It also provided funds for the upkeep of Tasmanian soldiers' graves in South Africa and collected money from the Marys, Mays and Marions of Tasmania to send a present to Queen Mary. Only a hundred Marys donated the hardly impressive sum of £6, but on a visit to England Stourton presented a gift to the Queen, a more pleasant task that the 'rather trying' one of lecturing 2,000 schoolchildren about Queen Victoria (the children chattered among themselves).3 Though many League members belonged to philanthropic societies, some like Stourton did not, so it involved a new group of women in public activity. Even in this placid-sounding group there was friction, though the *Tasmanian Mail* said in its report of the 1910 annual meeting that a little friction was no bad thing, as it woke people up.4 The League appears to have been a self-contained organisation which did not greatly influence the wider community, as the lack of response of the thousands of Marys in Tasmania and the chattering children indicate.

More overt patriotism was apparent at occasions like Queen Victoria's jubilees in 1887 and 1897; in 1887 a ladies' committee collected funds for a fulsome address to the Queen.5 The Boer War resulted in enormous feminine activity; women organised many patriotic functions in aid of the troops, and Lady Gormanston called a meeting of women and girls to provide clothing for soldiers. This resulted in the formation of many Union Jack Societies, and about 8500 garments were made in two months; woman was 'in her element'.6 The 'girls of Hobart', in red, white and blue, gave the troops a 'great send-off', and the relief of Ladysmith led to a 'patriotic demonstration...a splendid, soul-stirring display' which moved many women to tears. The governor's daughter stood on the steps of the Town Hall, waving a Union Jack and surrounded by girls, singing 'Soldiers of the

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1 *Tasmanian Mail* 23 January, 25 May 1904, 11 April, 7 October 1908, 28 March 1912; TC P 369.2946 VIC
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 9 January 1904, 9 May, 12 September 1908, 19 October 1911, 24 May 1914; *Daily Post* 13 January 1910; TC P 369.2946 VIC
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 29 October 1904, 15 December 1910, 19 January 1911, 12 May 1906, 2 March 1907; *Daily Post* 16 February 1912; *Examiner* 1 March 1911
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 27 October 1910
5 *Mercury* 5 May 1887; P.B. Walker (ed) *Prelude to Federation* OBM, Hobart, 1976, p. 50
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 30 December 1899, 13, 20, 27 January, 3, 10, 17, 24 February, 3, 10, 17, 24 March, 14 April, 12 May, 21 July, 15 December 1900; 19 May 1900 (in her element)
Queen'. Such public behaviour indicates how much more liberated these girls were than former generations. Similar displays occurred when Mafeking was relieved, and the *Tasmanian Mail* thought many girls immensely grateful for the chance to 'go in for larks' which they did not usually dare attempt - blowing horns, beating gongs.

In 1901 Lady Dodds organised that the visiting Duchess of York be presented with a rug; the next patriotic event was the King's coronation, and the premier's wife called a meeting to organise a tea for 1,000 poor children (though it was found difficult to obtain sufficient children); a similar event was held in Launceston. When the coronation was delayed a committee of Hobart ladies under the mayoress sent the Queen a cable of sympathy. Many women also supported Tasmanian and Australian events, and Alix urged women to back Federation, as they were affected by it. The Launceston mayoress invited ladies to help provide a federal flag for a pro-federation demonstration, and Lady Braddon presented it at a public meeting. Patriotic activity involved many Tasmanian women especially upper and middle class women, and it is noticeable that the impetus came from those with husbands in public positions. The extent of participation by working class women is unknown, though there is no mention of it in the *Clipper* or the *Daily Post*. Nevertheless, patriotic, particularly royalist, interest was widespread; the only event other than family life which Mary Smith, a farmer near Forth, recorded in her diary was the coronation's postponement, and Florence Skemp, a farmer's wife at Myrtle Bank, 'quite uninterested' in politics, had 'very royalist sentiments'.

Various forms of artistic work had always been acceptable feminine endeavour, and from the 1850s women sent work to exhibitions outside Tasmania; for example, in 1855 eight Tasmanian women sent such articles as a muff of sheep and possum wool and embroidery depicting native plants to the Universal Exhibition of Industry in Paris. Emily Dobson was secretary of a large committee of women which organised a Women's Court for the International Exhibition of 1895 in Hobart. Typing, paper bag work, toys, hair dressing, straw and basket work and flower making were represented. In 1907 came the Exhibition of Women's Work in Melbourne, which precipitated considerable activity in

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1 *Tasmanian Mail* 10, 24 March 1900
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 12, 26 May 1900
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 27 April, 1, 8 June 1901
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 14 June, 12 July, 16 August 1902
5 *Tasmanian Mail* 14 August 1897, 28 May 1898, 15, 22 July 1899
7 TC P Q 606.UNI: Tasmanian Contributions to the Universal Exhibition of Industry at Paris, 1855
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 11 August, 27 October, 15 December 1894, 13 April 1895

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Tasmania with many committees to organise exhibits and prizes offered (Lady Strickland for embroidery, Emily Dobson for bacon-curing); such women were involved 'heart and soul' and many more women assisted. Activity was confined to middle class women and criticism came from 'Lyell Mary', who said she was interested in an exhibition of women's work, but was less so when a meeting of women was called to meet Dobson, 'she of the Employers' Federation, who keeps my husband's wages down and wants to employ Asiatics'. Lyell Mary did not attend the meeting, at the home of the mine manager's wife - 'would a smelter man's wife feel comfortable there, especially when patronised to her face?' The democratic women of Queenstown looked askance at this. Other similar criticism appeared. How much it typified the reaction of working class women is unknown, but exhibits were by middle and upper class women, who had the spare time and money to prepare them. Prizes were won for woodcarving, bookbinding and photography.

Much activity in creative areas took place in music and art, both traditional feminine accomplishments and both part of the accepted education of young ladies. It is, however, difficult to separate professionals and amateurs; few women earned a living other than by teaching, but many worked for pleasure and some earned some money. There were many amateur women artists and several participated in exhibitions from the 1840s. Interest grew in the 1880s when art clubs were formed; the Hobart-based Art Society of Tasmania was dominated by women, who always formed two-thirds of exhibitors, and a similar situation occurred with the Launceston Art Society and in craft societies. Associated with art was photography; many female amateurs were members of the Camera Club from 1907.

The ability to sing or play an instrument was expected of ladies and as the standard of living rose the number of women who could afford a piano and music lessons grew; by the 1890s Marianne North, visiting Franklin, saw a hundred cottages, 'not one without a piano', though they cost over £30, and even poor farmers' daughters at Myrtle Bank learnt how to play 'Home Sweet Home'. Amateur musical evenings were a frequent form of

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1 Tasmanian Mail 6, 20 October 1906, 20 April, 4, 11, 25 May, 6 July, 17 August, 14 September 1907, 8 February 1908
2 Clipper 11 May 1907
3 Clipper 9 November 1907
4 Tasmanian Mail 2 November 1907
5 TC P Q 708.9946 CAT; TC P 708.9946 HOB; TC P 706.4 HOB; TC P 708.9946 LAU
7 Tasmanian Mail 16 February, 2 November 1907
8 Marianne North Recollections of a Happy Life vol 2, Macmillan, London, 1892, p. 175; Skemp p. 103
entertainment and a huge number of women could and did perform at all manner of functions, singing at concerts, in choirs both secular and ecclesiastical, and performing on instruments at charity concerts, church and private functions. The first musical society was the Hobart Town Choral Society of 1843 which included four women,¹ and from this date a number of musical societies came and went in Hobart and later Launceston, all usually lasting only a few years, all apparently including men and women.² Some were connected with churches. In 1894 a mixed choir of three hundred went to a mainland Exhibition, and later several women's choirs were formed, for example in 1911 in Launceston the Alexandra Choir, which aimed to keep all business in the hands of women and work from women's point of view.³ By 1914 women's interest and activity in amateur music was widespread and musical societies existed in all areas of the state (for example, there was a Strahan Choral Society⁴). Amateur theatre was also popular; plays or tableaux were often put on, sometimes for charity, from the time Lady Denison introduced tableaux in 1847,⁵ and dramatic societies came and went from the 1870s.⁶

Horticulture was another interest. Lady Denison was the first woman to show plants in horticultural shows;⁷ after her departure few women exhibited (though many attended shows) until approximately 1900, when the Amateur Horticultural Society enrolled 'many lady members' and it was commented that many women devoted the greater part of the day to gardening.⁸ Women now frequently exhibited in shows, and in 1910 Launceston ladies organised a bulb show to revive the Horticultural Society.⁹ From the 1870s agricultural

¹ J. Stops 'A Century of Music in Hobart 1804-1904' p. 14 (NS 694); *Cyclopedia of Tasmania* vol 2, p. 61
² Stops, passim; Walch's Almanacs 1863-1880 passim e.g. 1865 p. 120, 1878 p. 183, 1888 p. 275
³ NS 936; *Tasmanian Mail* 18 December 1909 (Hobart), 2 March, 4 May, 19 October, 2 November 1911 (Launceston)
⁴ *Tasmanian Mail* 12 October 1911
⁵ *Alexander Governors' Ladies* p. 132
⁶ Walch's Almanacs 1863-1900 passim, in 'Societies in Hobart' and 'Societies in Launceston'; Bolger p. 309; examples of societies are the Gaiety Players (*Tasmanian Mail* 27 June 1891, 10 June 1892, 23 March 1895; TC P 792.09946 GAI) and the Muffs (*Tasmanian Mail* 20 June 1891). By 1909 there were groups of amateur actors in country towns such as Latrobe and Ulverstone (*Tasmanian Mail* 12 June, 9 October 1909)
⁷ *Alexander Governors' Ladies* p. 140
⁸ *Tasmanian Mail* 23 June 1900, and gardening was promoted for women, 25 February 1899
⁹ *Tasmanian Mail* 15 September 1910
shows were popular and every town had its annual show where women exhibited such items as cookery, needlework, butter and flower arrangements, some taking this very seriously.¹

Most women's activity included at least an element of social activity, but some clubs were intended primarily as social institutions. Such clubs had been suggested sporadically for some time² and short-lived ones opened in 1905 and 1908.³ In 1910 Emily Dobson began a Women's Club in connection with the National Council of Women. She was its mainstay, giving talks and lantern slides and organising activities. This institution became the Lyceum Club in 1913.⁴ Even less intellectual was the Queen Mary Club, also established in 1910, where women played cards, had afternoon tea and entertained friends. The high subscription, one guinea, meant only wealthy women could use the club, which had no altruistic purpose but was a social club for the elite.⁵ From 1903 onwards Bridge was popular and a number of women's Bridge Clubs were formed, for example the Zeehan Ladies' Bridge Club of 1911.⁶

The first public entertainments were balls, given by the governor's wife and wealthy women from 1814 onwards.⁷ Other functions included dances and horse races, and these remained major forms of entertainment. Once women became involved with charitable fundraising activities these often doubled as social events and there were criticisms of women on this score: most people, however, accepted that it was permissible to raise money and enjoy a social occasion at the same time. With the growth of churches many women found their main source of entertainment at church activities, and even church services had a social function, a break from work and a chance to meet friends. In general, however, entertainments were rare, especially in the country, where women were mostly confined to their homes by the vast amount of work and the infrequency with which entertainments were held, the occasional show, church fair or dance being the only public entertainments offered.⁸

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¹ See Alison Alexander Glenorchy 1804-1964 Glenorchy City Council, Glenorchy, 1986, pp. 80, 81; Skemp p. 165. Latrobe's first show was in 1874 (Charles Ramsay With the Pioneers second edition, Latrobe Group of the National Trust of Australia [Tasmania], Hobart, 1979, p. 188)
² Tasmanian Mail 7, 28 September, 16, 30 November, 14, 28 December 1901
³ Tasmanian Mail 9 September, 18 November 1905, 11 January 1908, 9, 23 January 1909
⁴ Tasmanian Mail 22 January, 2, 30 April, 8 September, 3 November, 15 December 1910, 9 October 1913; Daily Post 23 July 1910
⁵ Tasmanian Mail 2, 7, 21 July 1910, 1 June 1911; TC P 367.9946 ATK
⁶ Tasmanian Mail 6 April 1911
⁷ Skemp, passim, Kathleen and Phyllis Bannister The History of Osterley the Authors, New Norfolk, 1974, passim; other local histories also give this picture
In the 1890s middle class entertainments were recorded in the women’s pages of newspapers. Hobart ladies could attend the theatre, dances, the regatta, at homes, conversaziones, afternoon teas, euchre parties, bazaars, an art exhibition, flower shows, picnics, tennis and polo matches, the races and harrier matches,1 though Alix was scathing about ladies attending a court case and thought it was not the done thing to watch football matches either (the entirely respectable Merediths went to a match in 1891, however).2 In 1892 came the chance to see the ‘sensation’ of the painting ‘Nana’.3 These activities mostly took place in the brief summer season when the Navy appeared for the Regatta; the rest of the year was quieter, with winter amusements ‘long walks, literary clubs or good works’.4 In 1899 Alix commented that life was a round of ‘the same old calls, afternoon teas, flower shows, sales, tennis, hunting, golfing...changes come about so gradually here’; the social round was the same year in year out; afternoon teas given by the same people and attended by the same friends, concerts with the same songs sung, hunts at the same place; even the conversation was the same.5 In Launceston ‘one can pass weeks without the opportunity to attend social functions or amusements’; ‘Launceston is a city of churches and church-workers’, wrote the correspondent in 1902.6 By the turn of the century there were some new forms of entertainment; it was quite usual for parties of girls with an older lady as chaperone to take a cottage for a week and do their own housework; in 1906 women flocked to see Holman Hunt’s ‘The Light of the World’; football matches were finally acceptable.7 Ladies crowded to hear Melba and found wool sales interesting in 1909; ‘Tasmanian women are progressive - no doubt about it’.8 From about 1900 it does seem that some urban women were looking for change and were not content to repeat the old pattern. In 1904 some women were even smoking cigarettes after dinner, a habit the Mail called ‘loathsome to the eye’.9

Change was less sought after in rural areas. A correspondent for the Mail on the north-west coast described the social scene there from 1908: there were Bridge and euchre parties, dances, afternoon teas, church fairs, plays put on by local groups and football

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1 For example, Tasmanian Mail 4 April, 21 November 1891, 23 January 1892, 20 May 1893, 23 March 1895
2 Tasmanian Mail 21 May 1898; NS 615/15 25 July 1891
3 Clipper 5 January 1892
4 For example Tasmanian Mail January - March 1891; 28 March 1896
5 Tasmanian Mail 13 May, 19 August 1899
6 Tasmanian Mail 27 November 1897, 23 August 1902
7 Tasmanian Mail 19 April 1902, 17 October 1903, 9 June, 14 July 1906
8 Tasmanian Mail 9 January, 10 April 1909, 11 June 1904
9 Tasmanian Mail 5 March 1904
matches. Similarly a West Coast correspondent described activities from 1910; many were concerned with churches and charities, for example a committee of ladies ran a charity ball at Linda in aid of a distressed family. In country towns the main entertainments were dances or socials; such entertainments were attended by nearly everyone, with less social stratification than in larger centres. Although outside entertainments such as moving pictures and touring theatrical performances were sometimes available, most of the entertainment was provided by local people with women predominating as organisers in most areas except sport; even in cities much of the entertainment was so organised. The responsibility of women for providing a large percentage of society's entertainment, not only at such functions but in organisations like Trade Unions, gave them considerable importance. This was often acknowledged at the time by men, though frequently in a condescending way; entertainment, though in fact important for the smooth running of society, was seen as a sideline suitable for women, leaving men free for work viewed as more important, such as, in the case of trade unions, political activity.

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1 *Tasmanian Mail* 27 June, 19 September 1908, 12 June, 9 October 1909, 16 April, 18 June, 28 July 1910, 19 October 1911, 26 June 1913
2 For example *Tasmanian Mail* 8 September, 10 November 1910, 9 November 1911 (church functions), 25 January 1912 (ball), 1 February 1912 (Zeehan Trades Picnic), 19 October 1911 (Zeehan Caledonian Society haggis supper and dance), 8 September 1910 (Dog and Poultry Society show), 15 September 1910 (moving picture and skating), 22 September 1910 (euchre, football and bazaar), 16 November 1910 (concert)
Sport

The image of the Victorian woman is not one of the outdoor activist, but from information available it appears that Tasmanian women usually led lives which included a considerable amount of vigour. Walking was important both as a means of transport and for pleasure. In 1828 Mrs Fenton enjoyed walking in the bush;¹ Lady Franklin was exceptionally active, climbing Mount Wellington and walking at least part of the way to the West Coast, and though she was criticised for some activities, her walking exploits were not among them.² Young ladies' seminaries announced they provided the advantages of seabathing,³ so this too was accepted for women. The Cox ladies of Clarendon bathed, gardened and enjoyed archery and croquet.⁴ The Meredith womenfolk of Swansea went bathing, riding and walking along the beach, and attended many dances; fourteen-year-old Jessie also liked climbing trees, racing up and down the jetty and collecting shells. The women played croquet, tennis and quoits, and often had to 'go for the post', a considerable ride or walk.⁵ Opportunities for activity were fewer in the towns, but Beatrice Travers walked a good deal and in 1880 described a ten-mile walking picnic with fifty people present; she also enjoyed swimming.⁶ In 1889 Mrs Kingsmill walked to New Town Falls and Ida McAulay often went for walks around Fern Tree.⁷ Mary Smith of Forth often walked to Ulverstone, two hours away, to visit relations.⁸ There were many 'good and fearless horse-women', and the 'turfy' discourse of 'some few young and (otherwise) lady-like women' startled Louisa Anne Meredith.⁹ One woman, ex-convict landowner Mary Smith, raced horses, winning the Hobart Town Plate in 1844.¹⁰ In fact, all contemporary records show physical activity as a major feature of most women's lives, especially as the major means of transport, walking and riding, required it.

¹ Mrs Fenton's Tasmanian Journal 1829-1830 Sullivan's Cove, Adelaide, 1986, pp. 34, 40-41, 76
² Alison Alexander Governors' Ladies THRA, Hobart, 1987, chapter 9
³ Hobart Town Courier 4 February 1842; Mercury 9 January 1858
⁴ R and C Cox Life at Clarendon National Trust (Tasmania), Launceston, 1988, pp. 7, 11, 15
⁵ NS 615/1 24 January, 7 March, 13, 24 April, 10, 20 June, 24 August 1878; NS 615/10 7 February, 22 September 1887
⁶ UTA K 9/6.2 13 March 1880, 4 January 1879
⁷ UTA K 2/2 19 September 1889; NS 1077/4 14 January 1897
⁸ NS 234/15 3, 8, 9 January 1902 for example
⁹ Quoted in Ruth Teale (ed) Colonial Eve Oxford University Press, Melbourne, 1978, p. 73
¹⁰ H. Freedman and A. Lemon The History of Australian Thoroughbred Racing vol 1, Melbourne, 1987, p. 108
There was little organised sport for women, though upper class women shot at the Tasmanian Archery Club in Hobart from 1863 to 1865\footnote{Walch’s Almanac 1863 p. 113, 1865 p. 115} and some wealthy women hunted.\footnote{National Trust (Tasmania) *Campbell Town Tasmania* Campbell Town Municipal Council, Campbell Town, 1966, p. 252} At the other end of the social scale some women were pugilists, for example Nell Pratt of Campbell Town.\footnote{Walch’s Almanac 1871 p. 132; UTA L1/8/2(2) 31 May, 28 June 1864} Turkish Baths, established in Hobart in 1870 and later in Launceston and Campbell Town, were open to women but were seen as more a health aid than exercise.\footnote{Walch’s Almanac 1871, 276} A roller-skating rink was the ‘new amusement’ in Hobart in 1867 and a cartoon showed a girl skating, though to what extent women took up skating is unknown.\footnote{Tasmanian Punch 1 June 1867}

The first sport taken up by women on any scale was tennis. Women played tennis informally from the 1870s and by the 1880s many tennis clubs had female members.\footnote{Walch’s Almanac 1871 p. 132; UTA L1/8/2(2) 31 May, 28 June 1864} In 1890 a team of Hobart women played a Launceston team and in 1891 it was remarked that interest in tennis was reviving with several women’s clubs formed.\footnote{Tasmanian Punch 1 June 1867} From this time onwards tennis was one of the most popular sports for women; many wealthy people had courts and tennis afternoons were a frequent entertainment, providing exercise and enjoyment. Clubs proliferated, with two in the relatively small town of Latrobe.\footnote{Walch’s Almanac 1871 p. 132; UTA L1/8/2(2) 31 May, 28 June 1864} A match was described in 1899: in a ‘very enjoyable afternoon' friendly games took place and the indispensable afternoon tea ended a 'very pleasant meeting’.\footnote{Mercury 21 October 1899} One club, for women only, organised euchre parties, drives and picnics as well, showing the social aspect of much sport.\footnote{Tasmanian Mail 7 November 1908 (Ximenes Club)}

The 1890s saw an amazing expansion in women’s sport. Bicycling made the most difference to women, providing increased mobility and independence. The first female bicyclists appeared in 1895; Alix of the *Tasmanian Mail* told her readers that no girl need hesitate to buy a bike though care must be taken not to appear 'awkward and ungraceful, if not unwomanly'.\footnote{Tasmanian Mail 21 September, 16 November 1895} The *Tasmanian News* noted the alacrity with which women had taken to

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1 Walch’s Almanac 1863 p. 113, 1865 p. 115
2 National Trust (Tasmania) *Campbell Town Tasmania* Campbell Town Municipal Council, Campbell Town, 1966, p. 252
3 *Campbell Town Tasmania* p. 327
4 Walch’s Almanac 1871 p. 132; UTA L1/8/2(2) 31 May, 28 June 1864
5 *Tasmanian Punch* 1 June 1867
6 UTA K 9/6.2 22 May 1879, 3 February 1880; NS 615/1 7 March 1878; when the New Town Lawn Tennis Club was formed in 1885 it included women members (*Mercury* 7 August 1884)
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 13 September 1890, 31 October, 14 November, 19 December 1891
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 23 October 1897, 28 March 1912; *Mercury* 2 March 1904
9 *Mercury* 21 October 1899
10 *Tasmanian Mail* 7 November 1908 (Ximenes Club)
11 *Tasmanian Mail* 21 September, 16 November 1895

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the wheel. In 1896 Lord and Lady Brassey cycled through Tasmania. The sight of a
governor's wife on a bicycle, wrote the *Mail*, 'attracts many excited spectators and rouses
enthusiasm for bicycles in many a womanly bosom'. That year women's cycling really took
off; there were cycling parties and picnics and Alix remarked that cycling led to
independence, ultra-rationality, disregard of personal appearance, loss of sensitivity and
regard for others, and a growth in unreliability. How and why she did not explain, but her
disapproval can be seen as typical of the older generation's dislike of the new and not
traditionally feminine sport. The following year the *Mail* printed the tale of two ladies
cycling from Launceston to Hobart who, on a hot and dusty day, entered a hotel and 'much
to the astonishment of those present' asked for brandies and soda, which they drank on the
verandah with much enjoyment. This was real independence - women, unescorted by men,
cycling long distances and drinking in a hotel. Ida McAulay, wife of a university lecturer
and most respectable, began cycling this year, and a Cycling Touring Club was formed, but
little more was printed about cycling, possibly as it was taken for granted. Women
continued to use it as a means of transport. In 1904 news came from The Steppes of the first
female cyclist to visit Great Lake and cross the Western Tier.

Even more mobility was provided by the car. The first woman to own a car was
mentioned in 1904 and in 1906 the first 'lady chauffeur' was noted. She planned to drive
from Hobart to Launceston (accompanied by a professional and presumably male
chauffeur). The expense of cars, however, meant this activity was restricted to a very few
women.

Hunting and riding (now mainly astride) continued popular, for sport and transport.
Women attended hunt clubs and Kathleen Mitchell of Jericho described how large parties
came from Hobart in the season, hunting by day and dancing and playing charades in the
evenings, finishing with an end-of-season ball. Ida McAulay extolled the enjoyment of
hunting: it was a glorious sport, she wrote, rough but with no danger. Ladies rode as

1 *Tasmanian News* 24 October 1895
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 11 January 1896
3 *Tasmanian Mail* 17, 22 August, 10, 24 October 1896
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 23 January 1897
5 NS 1077/4 19 March, 10 November 1897; *Tasmanian Mail* 7, 28 August 1897
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 6 February 1904
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 11 June 1904, 8 December 1906
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 30 March 1907
9 K. Mitchell *A Tasmanian Farm and other things* Arthur H. Stockwell, London, 1932, p. 87; and see
   *Mercury* 18 May 1896
straight as men 'and are always well to the fore'. An Osterley girl thought nothing of riding across the Ouse river to attend hunt clubs. Sports meetings included riding events for women, for example 'tilting the ring' at Osterley sports meetings, where female winners were cheered for the 'graceful and able manner in which their horses were managed'.

Several new sports were taken up by men and women in the 1890s. In 1893 a golf club was established; the course was 'long and difficult' and in March 1896 the club had only twelve female members, but by November there were 22 and the club held its first ladies' match. Golf increased in popularity and in 1906 Tasmania provided an Australian champion in Miss Elvie Whitesides; when she was presented with her prize, however, her father spoke for her. The governor's wife, Lady Strickland, was an enthusiastic player and this gave the sport total acceptance among the upper-class women who played it. Gymnastics also became popular; in 1894 Miss Mackenzie had a gymnasium in Hobart, with rings, trapezes, dumbells and club swinging, later gymasia were established in Hobart and Launceston and clubs were formed, usually for men and women. As physical fitness came to be seen as an advantage, gymnastics were praised, and in 1900 a 'large number of young people go in for gym'. Gym spread outside the two main towns and in 1908 classes were held in Devonport. Another new sport was roller skating, first mentioned in 1889 when Beatrice Butler skated at the Hobart rink. Public carnivals and races are mentioned in 1900; in 1903 two thousand people watched walking matches of five miles for men and two miles for women.

Cricket also became popular among women. Matches were mentioned in 1889, though in 1891 women were warned not to play in public as they could not show to advantage. Many ignored this advice, for a Ladies' Cricket Match was held before most of fashionable Hobart, while at the other end of the social spectrum at Sassafras a women's
team played a men's team, who bowled left-handed and batted with sticks.\textsuperscript{1} By 1893 the
game had reached Bruny Island, where the men's team played eleven local girls. Much to
their surprise, the men were beaten. 'The ladies were dressed in red and blue, and looked
very happy and bright, moving about with agility and grace'.\textsuperscript{2} Women were not so
successful in 1895 against a men's team: the men played too well left-handed, so continued
with axe handles.\textsuperscript{3} These are examples of matches which occurred throughout Tasmania.
Cricket was easy to learn, required little equipment and was, like tennis, very sociable.
Many places had their women's cricket team, even townships as small as Lefroy and
Osterley, while larger towns had well-established clubs (for example, the Derwent Ladies'
Cricket Club, with medals for the best catches taken, the most popular player and so on).\textsuperscript{4} Cricket was one game played by women of all classes, especially in country areas where any
girl was welcome in the local cricket team.

Bushwalking, on the contrary, had long been established as a pastime but was
reported in the press only occasionally, for example in 1873 when a Launceston lady
climbed Mount Wellington.\textsuperscript{5} Frequent reports only appeared in the 1890s; for example, in
1895 a party of four men and six women camped for a fortnight at Lake St Clair, and a
second group included the governor's wife.\textsuperscript{6} A group of young ladies took a house at Fern
Tree and went for many walks.\textsuperscript{7} More adventurous were the first two women to climb
Adamson's Peak, in 1897, accompanied by male relations. Once out of public view the
women took off their skirts, 'skirts being completely out of the question for a mountain
climb'. Presumably they then wore trousers, though the \textit{Mail} was too delicate to report this.
'Nothing daunted by the roughness of the track' they reached the summit and that of another
mountain in their four-day walk. 'The feat is not at all too difficult for ladies, suitably
accompanied and attired.'\textsuperscript{8} The following year an expedition of men and women to the
Chudleigh Caves was described.\textsuperscript{9}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1] Peter Bolger \textit{Hobart Town} Australian National University Press, Canberra, 1973, pp. 184, 302; Sassafras
School Parents and Friends Association \textit{Sassafras the Association}, Sassafras, 1988, p. 87
\item[2] \textit{Mercury} 11 May 1893
\item[3] \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 30 March 1895
\item[4] \textit{Clipper} 22 December 1894; Bannister p. 39; \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 31 July 1913, 14 April 1906
\item[5] \textit{Examiner} 6 March 1873
\item[6] \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 9 March 1895
\item[7] \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 30 March 1895
\item[8] \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 24 July 1897
\item[9] \textit{Tasmanian Mail} 15 January 1898
\end{footnotes}
A well-known bushwalker was Tasmanian Kate Weindorfer, who climbed Cradle Mountain in 1909; the first guests at Waldheim included some ladies.1 In 1911 a number of women walked forty kilometres from Zeehan to Trial Harbour and back, and had 'a lovely time'; when another party did the walk 'of course, they had suitable escort'. Numerous parties of women also enjoyed ten kilometre walks to get berries; 'to West Coast ladies that is a mere nothing'.2 In 1911 the matron of the Salvation Army home and another female officer became lost while walking on Mount Wellington, and spent the night in the open. Apparently they had no male escort.3 The wife of the warden of Christ College was well-known as the second woman to ascend Mount Cook.4 With such respectable adherents as the warden's wife and the Salvation Army matron, bushwalking was clearly a completely acceptable pastime for women, even, by 1911, unescorted by males.

Swimming was another popular sport, but like bushwalking it had its dangers, and in 1910 a woman bather drowned.5 By 1905 mixed bathing was popular. A writer in the Clipper extolled the sport as providing exercise and fresh air and being especially good for women.6 In 1913 some people were reported to behave badly while indulging in mixed bathing - appearing scantily clad and going too near each other on the beach - and the local council wanted to enforce neck-to-knee bathing outfits.7 Ladies' Swimming Baths were opened in Launceston in 1908 and were described as a 'valuable asset', though the crowds there led to 'pandemonium'.8

There was an attempt to reintroduce archery9 but it never became popular. Croquet was played at private homes and in 1905 was described as 'all the rage' among women. Clubs were established and a ladies' croquet ground was built in Hobart.10 Badminton received a mention but never became popular.11 A few unusual sports were noted: ladies and gentlemen drove carts at a dog cart meet in 1890 and in 1895 both sexes took part in a

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2 Tasmanian Mail. 2 March, 3 August 1911, and see 28 March 1912 (another 24 mile walk)
3 Daily Post 8 May 1911
4 Tasmanian Mail 22 May 1913
5 Tasmanian Mail 2 April 1910
6 Clipper 21 January 1905
7 Daily Post 13 February 1913
8 Tasmanian Mail 18 January 1908
9 Tasmanian Mail 2 July 1892, 25 November 1893, 2 March 1895, 30 April 1898; Clipper 25 November 1893
10 Alison Alexander Glenorchy 1804-1964 Glenorchy City Council, Glenorchy, 1986, p. 130; NS 615/124 August 1878; Tasmanian Mail 30 November 1895, 11 March 1905; Walch’s Almanac 1907 p. 325
11 Tasmanian Mail 30 November 1895

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paperchase. Ping-pong was all the go in 1901-1902 and 'puff' billiards was similarly popular in 1902. An unusual pastime for women was rifle shooting. Ida McAulay started a club among a dozen friends: several men dropped out, being no match for the women, two or three of whom were excellent shots. The club collapsed when McAulay went away. In 1900 the Hamilton Literary Society heard of the possibility of a ladies' rifle corps but little subsequent interest was taken. Ellen Butler described how she learnt to shoot with her brothers while on holidays in the country, and probably this was true of many country girls.

Most of the innovation in women's sport took place in the 1890s and the following years were ones of consolidation. Some new sports were introduced: women started to play bowls, hitherto a masculine game, and in 1903 there were two women's teams in Launceston, for single and married women. From 1906 hockey was played; Launceston girls were described as 'very keen' players and teams were formed in many towns, with a Hockey Tennis Club in East Devonport. In 1911 three state teams were formed.

A few sports were attempted with less success: in 1910 a baseball club existed, in 1912 two Hobart rowing clubs had female crews, and 'Should Girls Play Football?' was the title of a newspaper article that year. Yes was the answer, by a woman who could box, wrestle and do ju jitsu. Girls could not be healthy unless they shook themselves up and went in for a good romp. There was no beauty without health. Football was 'not a scrap unmaidenly' - it was exciting, 'thoroughly alive' and great fun. There is no evidence that Tasmanian girls took this advice, but it was there for them to read, advice nobody thought of giving before the 1890s.

In this period schools came to realise the benefits of physical exercise. The Cox girls went to drill classes in the 1850s and by the 1880s many private girls' schools attended

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1 *Tasmanian Mail* 16 August 1890, 25 May 1895
2 *Tasmanian Mail* 31 August 1901, 22 February, 1 March 1902. 'Puff' billiards appeared to be played by blowing light balls over a table
3 *NS 374/7*
4 *Tasmanian Mail* 15 September 1900, 20 November 1909 (one ladies' match)
5 *NS 374/7*
6 *Tasmanian Mail* 1 November 1902, 11 April 1903
7 *Tasmanian Mail* 21 July 1906, 18 May 1907, 5, 19 September 1908, 26 June, 4 September 1909, 28 July 1910, 13 July, 14 September 1911; and see *Daily Post* 14 July 1914
8 *Tasmanian Mail* 6 October 1910; *Daily Post* 3 March 1912; and on 7 October 1905 the *Clipper* encouraged women's rowing
9 *Daily Post* 28 February 1912

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gymnastics classes. The idea spread rapidly and by 1914 all school children were taught at least exercises, which were reasonably easy for even untrained teachers to lead. Team sports became popular: cricket and tennis in the 1890s, and from 1898 basketball, 'the new game for girls...exceedingly pretty', with no roughness but with scope for running about, dives and scrimmages, 'in which the natural grace of a girl is shown or otherwise'. Hockey became popular from 1906. These sports came and went, however: by 1914 tennis was the only team sport at the Girls' High School, though rounders and French cricket were played in the lunch hour. By 1900 several private girls' schools had specialist physical education teachers. State schools had no team sports for girls at this period.

Many sports were confined to middle class women, who had the time and money to indulge in them, but some had a more widespread following, possibly gym, bushwalking, cricket and hockey. For many poorer families, however, hard work was a fact of life and walking the only means of transport, so walking for pleasure was unthought of. Many working class women obtained quite enough exercise in their daily work without needing sport; any spare time was spent resting, not in activity. Working women such as domestic servants did not have the free time for sport.

Watching men's sport, however, particularly cricket and football, had long been a leisure activity among all women. In 1887 the Southern Tasmanian Football Association's subscription entitled the (male) member to bring two ladies to matches. Women also raised money for men's sports. 'I wonder what many of the sports' associations would do if it were not for their lady friends, who come forward so readily to help them out of financial difficulties?' asked a journalist in 1912. In sport women's participation certainly grew, but women also maintained their traditional role of supporting men.

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2 *Tasmanian Mail* 28 May 1892, 24 September 1898

3 In 1906 basketball had to be 'revived' (*Tasmanian Mail* 30 June 1906)

4 *Tasmanian Mail* 30 June 1906; Alexander 'The Girls' High School' p. 121

5 Walch's Almanac 1887 p. 250

6 *Tasmanian Mail* 2 May 1912
Women's Voluntary Activity

From 1804 to 1914 over 400 women's organisations existed in Tasmania, covering interests such as charity, church work, temperance, politics, intellectual, social and patriotic activity and sport, and ranging from tiny, short-lived groups to large branches of world-wide organisations. The most traditional concern of women's organisations was with charity. From the 1820s to 1914, 77 women's charitable organisations existed in Tasmania. Groups assisted by them were:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>14%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Prostitutes</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Servants and working girls</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women generally</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female convicts</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children</td>
<td>26%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The sick</td>
<td>21%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Nursing at home</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitals</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The poor, generally</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The unemployed</td>
<td>3%</td>
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<tr>
<td>The blind</td>
<td>1%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Men</td>
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<tr>
<td>Animals</td>
<td>4.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Object unknown</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above information shows that the vast majority of women's organisations helped people, with 79% assisting women, children and the sick, traditional areas in which women were expected to be interested. It is not necessary to assume from this, however, that women were pushed into these areas by men. The percentage of men's organisations involved in assisting women, children and the sick would have been similar, for able-bodied men, the only large category of society omitted, were expected to be able to look after themselves. Charities, male and female, centred their attention on those perceived by the community to need assistance, those whom a capitalist society based on male employment and usually unpaid female support (either by running the home or assisting in employment) left in difficult circumstances, usually caused by cessation of male support: orphans, poor children, widows, deserted wives. Charities were also concerned with those in danger of turning to crime or prostitution: neglected children, servants, working girls, prostitutes. None of these charitable societies questioned the capitalist society of the time and all tried to assist the unfortunate within the framework of society, to enable them to function successfully in the existing community. Children were given education leading to employment, the sick and the poor tided over a bad period until they re-established themselves, prostitutes persuaded of the error of their ways and found an alternative career. Most organisations concerned themselves only with those poor who responded suitably to
assistance by using it to establish or re-establish themselves respectfully, the deserving poor, though the records of the Dorcas Society show that it was often difficult both to draw a dividing line and to refuse assistance to sad but undeserving cases.

The activities performed by these organisations varied, but most involved a large amount of work. Nearly half, 42%, ran a home, school or other institution, a task requiring sustained effort and organisation. Others regularly visited their cases (22%), held meetings or classes for them (4%), or performed various minor acts such as taking flowers to the sick (5%). Virtually all organisations raised money, by fairs or by door-to-door canvassing.

The charitable work performed by women provided them with a number of benefits besides the obvious sense of usefulness and of performing a Christian duty, a duty which was seen as leading to their personal salvation. Virtually all work took women outside their homes and provided social interaction with other women and a break from domestic routine. Running an institution developed women's powers of organisation and gave them status and a sense of achievement in a field outside the domestic area. Visiting the poor was interesting and often enjoyable, providing a detailed knowledge of local affairs; it gave the visitor status and for some, affection, both for and from the people visited, and could take a woman outside her own problems. Bazaars were an outlet for women's needlework, an opportunity for legitimate trading and public activity otherwise denied many women, and an opportunity for entertainment and flirting: in 1837 a reporter at the Infant School Fancy Fair said he had 'never seen such liveliness and general interest in Hobart'. Unlike the situation in Britain, there was little criticism of bazaars in Tasmania: most charities were so short of funds that public activity by women was either condoned, or possibly, given Tasmania's less rigid and more practical society, not criticised in the first place. Women's motives included fulfilling Christian duty, a humanitarian care for the unfortunate, mixing with the elite (especially the vice-regal patroness), attempting to remove the criminal element of society and a missionary element of encouraging virtue among those who by a lack of such virtue had failed to cope with a capitalist society.¹

The sense of superiority provided by the chance to dispense charity must have resulted in some condescension from the rich to the poor, but as would be expected, this is seldom overtly described in contemporary records. Sometimes, however, it is clear, as in a description of the work of Mrs Alfred Kennerley, whose husband began the Boys' Industrial School in Hobart. After her death in 1877 the school's governors paid tribute to her memory. She helped plan and run the school, and was a constant visitor, 'ever cheering the Master and Matron by her presence, and aiding them with friendly counsel and advice'. Whether the professional directors desired amateur advice was not considered. Every Saturday, continued the obituary, well-conducted boys were rewarded 'by being allowed to


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visit [Mrs Kennerley] at her house, to work in her garden, and to enjoy the comfortable meal, which, in the kindliness of her heart, she provided for them', which sounds more like exploiting unpaid labour than charity. 'Much of the clothing for the boys was cut out and made up at her own house, and under her personal direction; and in many other matters she was indeed a benefactress, sparing neither time nor personal exertion to promote the best interests of the Home and its inmates.' Probably Mrs Kennerley did spend much time busy with the Home's affairs, but in return she received adulation and grovelling thanks and an exalted reputation, and was able to condescend to the poor in a possibly gratifying manner. Doubtless this situation occurred frequently.

It is difficult to establish the exact length of time organisations existed but it appears that nearly half, 38, (49%) lasted under five years (though this includes six organisations established after 1909 which continued after 1914). Of these, nine were organisations aiming to rescue prostitutes, a daunting task where initial enthusiasm tended to wane rapidly. In other cases lack of success, funds or of sufficient dedicated members led to disbandment. In most cases, however, the causes of a society's demise are unknown. Only occasionally was its task seen as finished. Sixteen organisations lasted for a moderately long period, five to fifteen years, and 23, 30%, for over fifteen years (with twelve for over 25 years). It cannot be assumed, however, that length of existence meant a flourishing state through these years: several societies went through difficult periods and nearly had to disband, and others merely struggled along, achieving little. In Britain and some mainland states there was centralisation of charities under one umbrella organisation (such as the Charity Organisation Society of Victoria); this was attempted in Hobart in 1906 when a Charitable Conference was held. Representatives of nine charities, ten women and twenty-one men, discussed the problems of overlapping and established a committee (two women and three men) to discuss the possibility of amalgamation. The Mercury thought this unlikely as heads of charities enjoyed being Lady Bountiful or Lord of the Manor, and no co-operative organisation eventuated: however, the conference does show that women were accepted as partners with men in charitable activity.

It was noted that charitable societies had difficulty in Tasmania, due to the prevailing apathy and the difficulty in persuading people to act, and this is borne out by the number of societies which lasted brief periods. Those which succeeded did so for a number of reasons: government financial assistance, which relieved the constant need for fundraising; the existence of one capable organiser who held the society together, or visits by outsiders spurring local women to activity; or the existence of an achievable aim, which was worthwhile and involved reasonably pleasant work which did not take up too much time. Societies with aims vague or difficult to achieve tended to collapse rapidly.

1 TC P 362.76 HOB p. 6
2 Mercury 28, 29 August 1906; the Tasmanian Mail was also doubtful of success (1 September 1906)
Women's organisations were frequently established by outsiders, especially women in positions of semi-authority such as governors' wives and bishops' wives, who were in Tasmania for a limited period and who sometimes saw it as their duty to establish such groups and introduce Tasmanian women to new ideas. They came from Britain and were in contact with recent developments there, and so were a medium for Tasmanian women to keep abreast of changing ideas of women's role (for example, many of the attempts to rescue prostitutes were originated by governors' wives, when most Tasmanian women would have had no idea of doing such a thing, as their general lack of support for such societies indicates). Other societies were formed by visitors from overseas, such as the succession of women who came to Tasmania to establish the WCTU. Tasmanian women appeared to need considerable encouragement to form and maintain organisations in several areas, though other organisations were apparently established by local women and continued to be run successfully by them. With organisations' origins frequently obscure it is impossible to generalise.

The frequency with which Tasmanian organisations were established by outsiders underlines how closely local philanthropy copied overseas, particularly British, activity. Virtually all Tasmanian charitable organisations were based on British models and few, if any, originated in Tasmania. In fact, in those areas where there was no need for charitable work in Britain, almost nothing was done in Tasmania. There were few attempts to assist female convicts or Aborigines, though they could well have done with some help; such groups did not exist in Britain, so there was no organisation for Tasmanians to duplicate.

Societies were usually run by a committee of from three to forty women, with the average probably about twelve. Other women gave support, particularly at fundraising events, but the number of women actively involved remained fairly small. Some women belonged to more than one society, but from the available evidence it appears that many women belonged to only one: few had the free time of, say, Emily Dobson, and most had domestic duties and family and leisure activities which would have left them feeling that one charity was enough. A group like the Dorcas Society, in any case, could take up a good deal of time, with monthly meetings, fundraising activities including door-to-door canvassing (extremely time-consuming) and equally time-consuming visiting of cases and organising the bag of clothing. Possibly, therefore, in 1891 when 20 women's charitable organisations existed, about 250 Tasmanian women were actively involved in them. The female population that year was 69,107, of which 12,578 were 'breadwinners' and possibly 30,000 were children. Others would have been old, ill, part-time workers or women who assisted their husbands virtually full time, but even so the percentage who belonged to charitable societies was obviously tiny.

One reason for this small percentage is that in most instances organised charity was the preserve of the middle classes, who had the time to engage in such activities, provided by
the lack of need to earn a living plus servants at home to fulfil some at least domestic duties. Virtually all women engaged in charity were the wives and daughters of professional men, well-to-do merchants and public servants. On the whole the small elite did not engage in charitable work, being more concerned with social activity, especially from the 1890s. Even so, only a small minority of eligible women was interested in charitable work, and social activity still held more appeal. Almost none of the women engaged in these charitable organisations appears to have come from the lower middle or working classes: such women were too busy with domestic concerns or employment. Besides, it is doubtful whether committees composed of middle class women would have welcomed women from a lower social class: they assisted such women, but did not expect to sit with them on committees.

As can be seen from the table below, most charitable societies were established in Hobart, the largest town, the seat of government and the site of many government institutions in which women's charitable organisations were interested, for example the orphanage. If one private institution served the whole island, it was usually situated in Hobart. Sometimes branches were established in Launceston, though these were often formed later and were shorter-lived than those in Hobart, as would be expected with the smaller population. Few societies outside these towns were recorded before 1910, though the activities of country societies were rarely reported and any documents were probably destroyed or lost. On the other hand, the *Tasmanian Mail* covered women's interests in Hobart, Launceston and the west and north-west coasts reasonably fully from the 1890s and mentioned few country societies, so it is probably reasonable to assume few existed.

### Women's Charitable Societies in Tasmania

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1820s</th>
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<th>1840s</th>
<th>1850s</th>
<th>1860s</th>
<th>1870s</th>
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<td>86</td>
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<td>1</td>
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<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(In the 1880s the site of one society is unknown)

Women participated in charities in three ways: by subscribing, assisting male-organised associations, or running their own. Women subscribed to charities from 1819, but as this was a passive activity with little impact on women's lives it has not been studied in depth.
Until the 1880s women's charitable work was limited. At first women's organisations assisted male enterprises; in 1851 their co-operation was seen as desirable in a good cause, implying that men were the leaders, and in 1856 male workers for the Ragged Schools were told not to look on ladies as their substitutes and leave all the work to them; they must regard them as fellow-workers. Possibly because of such attitudes, from the 1830s women formed and ran their own societies. There appeared to be no question but that they could do so; women had been forming such societies in England, while Tasmanian charitable activity was so limited further work by anyone was welcome. Women were soon seen to excel in many charitable areas, particularly fundraising; their societies were as successful as men's and from the 1850s women's committees assisting men were rare (and on the few occasions they eventuated often ended up running the charity).

Though some women were so energetic, however, the number of women's organisations was small and their aims were limited, with small, easily defined groups assisted: poor but respectable married women in labour, poor children, prostitutes, servants in between positions. Those which were successful worked in the most traditional areas, for example the Dorcas Society, Industrial and Ragged Schools. The failure of most societies shows a lack of interest in and commitment to sustained charity by many. Such limited and sporadic work implies a lack of general fervour in spreading the middle-class gospel; giving baby clothes, oatmeal and soap intermittently to poor women, or other ventures which failed, can scarcely be seen as an attempt by the middle class to impose their values on the working class, or an attempt to stifle unrest with charity (unrest was not in fact perceived as a problem in Tasmania). Women's charitable activity before the 1880s must be perceived as a humanitarian attempt by a small minority of middle-class women to assist those who, by bad luck or an absence of virtues such as thrift, sobriety or hard work, had temporarily fallen on bad times, assisting them for a limited period until they gained or regained respectable independence.

Various factors explain the lack of charitable activity in Tasmania, compared with Britain. Tasmania was still largely a convict society and virtually all charities worked with products of the convict system, but the middle class felt reluctant to assist convicts; convicts were seen as undeserving, as the responsibility of the government (grudgingly accepted by the government itself) and as dauntingly numerous, while many feared association with convicts for the social stigma this brought. The predominance of convicts and their families meant the middle class was numerically small; the colony was so new and so dominated by the government that in any case the middle class had no tradition of charity or, indeed, independent productive activity. Very few Tasmanian colonists came from the British upper middle class, which had traditionally dispensed charity. The influence of the church was less than in Britain; churches were struggling to establish themselves and concentrated on gaining adherents and these adherents' personal piety before they could extend their work to

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charity. There were thus few forces encouraging women to charitable activity; society expected them to be busy with family and home and these indeed took up much time, with servants being fewer than in Britain and needing much more supervision. It is, therefore, scarcely surprising that the woman involved in a charitable organisation was the exception rather than the rule.

From the 1880s, however, women's charitable activity expanded considerably, as the factors listed above waned in importance. The convict era was now past and most convicts themselves dead, lessening general reluctance to engage in charity, while the government abandoned much charitable activity, such as the Orphan Schools, leaving a void. To prove that they had left the convict era behind Tasmanians wished to demonstrate they were a respectable society, which meant disreputable elements must be persuaded or assisted to reform and potential criminals and prostitutes saved; societies with these aims were among the most successful. Churches were now better established and, as in Britain, stressed the importance of charitable work, as did many books and periodicals, which were read in Tasmania. Indeed the general encouragement of women to charitable activity, so pronounced in Britain, permeated to Tasmania and from the 1880s far more, though by no means all, middle-class women accepted charity as part of their Christian duty. They were assisted by a drop in the birth rate, which meant they had more free time and energy, and probably money, to devote to charity.

One trend in the later years of the period is that many organisations raised funds to support professionals instead of providing volunteers to do the work themselves. As the idea of professional training for careers grew, the skills of these professionals were recognised while activity by untrained, voluntary workers began to decline. At the same time the beginnings of the state welfare system meant that in the last few years of the period the need for charitable organisations began to lessen. This was not yet a strong trend, however, and at the same time many government institutions, even newly opened ones, had their ladies' auxiliary to raise money for extra needs, and the government allowed private organisations such as the Girls' Industrial Schools and Reformatory committees to control these institutions, which were largely funded by the government and which could have been seen as state responsibilities. By 1914, however, criticism of the ladies' committees' autocratic manner of conducting such institutions was beginning.

A further trend was for a wider range of charitable activity. Until the 1880s almost the only recipients of charity were women and children, but though these groups continued to be assisted new charities were formed. For the first time sympathy was expressed for men, as in the depression of the 1890s it was clear that there was not sufficient employment; subsequent charities which attempted to assist the unemployed were mostly run by women. Men and boys were also provided with education. The poor were given middle-class advantages, such as kindergartens, preschools, and trained nursing. Groups such as the
blind were assisted and some societies helped animals. By 1914 women’s charitable societies assisted a wide variety of unfortunates, many of whom had received no help before 1890; and this indicates that women’s horizons were widening.

Women’s aims widened too: charitable work, now so much more energetic and covering so many areas, can be seen as an attempt by middle class women to impose their values on the working class, particularly those sections of the working class who, by becoming poor, sick or otherwise incapable had failed to demonstrate the virtues of thrift, hard work and sobriety. Emily Dobson, predominant in charitable endeavours from the early 1890s, is the prime example of a confident middle-class woman who had no hesitation in encouraging or even pushing the poor to acquire such virtues and other middle-class women to assist her in this task.

Charitable work expanded considerably from the 1890s; somewhat later, but to a far greater extent, voluntary church work expanded. This was similar to charitable work, though there were differences. The impetus to found church organisations came from the church and members had only to attend meetings and follow instructions. It was thus easier for groups to be formed. In the main they were not concerned with charitable work: most church groups aimed at raising money to assist the church itself or overseas missions, or at raising the level of religious awareness in members, which often became translated into merely social activities with some prayer thrown in. Church groups were thus easy to belong to in that they required little activity by members; joining a church organisation was barely different from attending church and was, as well, encouraged by the church. A leader was usually available in the minister’s wife, and in difficult times there were church resources to fall back on, and sometimes a bishop’s wife to arrive and rejuvenate a branch. Church societies involved members with no actual contact with the poor or unfortunate, something many women found distasteful (the heathen at their missions were all safely overseas). For these reasons church organisations were often successful and enrolled a large number of women, giving them many of the benefits of charitable organisations.

Apart from requiring less effort from members, church organisations reached a larger number of women because they were open to a wider range of women. In theory at least, churches were classless and their organisations open to all female adherents of whatever background: in 1904 Mercer extolled the Mothers’ Union and Girls’ Friendly Society for seeking to bind together members drawn from every rank, though the GFS was later warned not to ‘let class feeling creep in’, clearly a danger. Executives were generally middle class but many working class women joined church societies and thus gained experience of women’s organisations. They gained even more experience in lodges, whose members came largely from the working classes; these women had a chance to play a public role, including taking executive positions, without the domination of the upper and middle classes.
All organisations discussed so far were working within the framework of existing society and not aiming for any great changes. In the 1890s, however, women did work for change, aiming to affect the general community in three areas which were not traditional womanly interests: temperance, public health and the suffrage. They worked through two societies, the Women's Christian Temperance Union (WCTU) and the Women's Sanitary Association (WSA).

In many ways the WSA was a traditional women's society: it was founded by the governor's wife and by Emily Dobson; it contained middle-class women who also sat on the Dorcas and Girls' Industrial School committees; women’s interest arose through their concern for health, a traditional feminine area. Its formation, however, was prompted by the inactivity of a men’s sanitation society, and it broke new grounds in its aims and methods; the hostility aroused by this shows Tasmanian reaction to women criticising men, challenging their authority and attempting to get their own ideas implemented. The other society which attempted change was the WCTU. Unlike the WSA, this was a branch of a world-wide body, and the impetus to form it came from outside Tasmania. For some years it languished; the reason was probably the novelty of the concept, the initial apparent lack of interest in temperance among Tasmanian women, and the fact that temperance did not appeal to many middle-class women, the sort who did join other organisations. Temperance tended to appeal to a lower social group, non-conformists, the wives of tradesmen and smaller merchants: Emily Dobson, for example, though sympathising with the WCTU, did not join until 1910, and there was little overlap of membership with societies such as the Dorcas or Girls' Industrial School committees.

Like the WSA, the WCTU gave women a new role, challenging and demanding concessions from male authorities and objecting vociferously to various public activities connected with alcohol. Some of its activities were usual womanly ones and occasioned no remark, but like the WSA the WCTU women tried to change laws by petitioning parliament and sending deputations to key figures; it also brought militant female speakers from overseas, and local women were encouraged to speak. Once again there was criticism of such activity as unwomanly: the President commented that women who went out to social events were not criticised but those who went to meetings were. The Union was ridiculed and its ideas were not taken seriously. Apathy was a major problem; it was difficult to establish and maintain the Union and only a succession of able and energetic leaders kept it going. It peaked in numbers and activity in the late 1890s, though thereafter continued to exist. Like the WSA it could point to no substantial achievement beyond bringing its subjects of interest to public notice, but, again like the WSA, it did show that women were capable of organising and carrying through considerable projects, of challenging and standing up to male authorities, even if not defeating them, and of acting independently of men in areas of public interest, those not before considered part of women's usual sphere.
The WCTU was also successful in introducing a large number of lower middle class and working class women to public activity. Such women as Annie Blair showed they could lead a movement as well as better-educated women.

In both these organisations women were strongly motivated by a firm and unshakable belief that they were entirely correct, and that this gave them the right to impose their views on others. Women in charitable organisations also thought their behaviour was correct, that they were right to help the poor or lecture prisoners and prostitutes, but this belief led only to interaction with those assisted. The WSA and WCTU were attempting to change public behaviour, improve all sanitation and lessen all drinking. This led to clashes with those who did not want sanitation improved or drinking stopped, and, as women tried to work through the (inevitably masculine) authorities, to clashes with them.

The third area in which some women tried to achieve change was in gaining the vote. It is sometimes claimed that activity in charity led women to see the importance of the suffrage and work for it, but this did not happen in Tasmania. Admittedly charitable work was limited, but few of the women engaged in it was active in fighting for the vote. Women’s suffrage was not such a cut-and-dried activity as the other two issues: there was no one organisation aiming to achieve it, no well-known local names connected with it, and no really strong movement among women themselves for it, though the large number of signatures to a petition show many women desired it. Interest in women’s suffrage only grew in the 1890s and the sole organisation to promote it was the WCTU, more because it was part of the world-wide Union’s platform than because of any strong local desire to do so, though there were some ardent suffragists in its ranks in Tasmania. The close identification of women’s suffrage with the WCTU probably prevented many non-temperance women from activity, and there was little sustained public interest in the question. In 1903 Tasmanian women received the vote; ironically, in the area in which they had shown least activity and interest and challenged men least, they achieved success.

It would be expected, after this lack of interest, that Tasmanian women had little involvement in politics and this was so until the last years of the period. Some women did work for political parties, canvassing and running social functions, but they were seen as auxiliaries to the real workers, men, and this was also the case with trade union activity. As with temperance and sanitary work, women in politics were sustained and encouraged by the firm belief, on both sides, of the justness of their cause. Though women could sit for parliament only one did so, and she was widely regarded as a figure of fun and polled badly.

As well as organisations connected with charity, public issues and politics, there were many societies which catered for women’s intellectual and cultural interests: reading circles, literary and debating associations, artistic and musical clubs. These grew enormously in numbers from the 1890s. Like charitable organisations, intellectual societies confined their membership to the middle classes, and many were begun by outsiders such as
governors' wives, though native-bom Emily Dobson established several. There were, however, some women's societies which attracted a more upper-class membership. These were more interested in social than in charitable or intellectual activity, though loyalty to the Empire was a strong feature. They involved a new group of women in public activity, the wealthy upper class elite.

One emotion which did unite a majority of Tasmanian women was patriotism. Schools instilled a love of Empire and in conservative Tasmania this was rarely questioned: it was assumed that all citizens were patriotic followers of the crown and apparently most were. The Boer War resulted in many women joining Union Jack societies in many areas of the state. Like church organisations, these were completely sanctioned; no one could possibly criticise a woman for unwomanly behaviour if she joined either group.

Another area in which women's activity increased enormously was organised sport. Although many women had enjoyed walking, riding and swimming from the early years of the colony, there was little organised sport until the 1890s, when it grew enormously, mainly among middle-class women but with some participation by the working class.

Before 1880 there were few women's organisations in Tasmania and those which existed were often shortlived. Only a few middle class women in Hobart and Launceston had the opportunity or desire to belong to any society and there was still a strong body of opinion which held that women should be content to remain at home fulfilling their domestic duties. Those societies which existed covered a limited range of interests, almost all being traditional charitable organisations. Women speakers were virtually unknown and it was assumed that women had little interest in public affairs. The only public area in which their abilities were really appreciated was fundraising, though quiet charity such as that carried on by the Dorcas Society won praise. This situation changed slowly in the 1880s and more rapidly in the 1890s, till by 1900 there was a large number of women's organisations covering many interests: a wider range of charities, intellectual matters, public health, temperance and suffrage interests, with an increasing number of organisations encouraging women to play sport. After 1900 the number increased further to include political activity, and many church organisations were established. By 1914 thousands of Tasmanian women belonged to one or more women's organisations. The stated aim of these varied enormously, but from all women obtained an escape from the home and the drudgery of domestic chores, a sense of community, an opportunity for involvement in interests outside the home and family, a chance to mix with other women, and, frequently, a gratifying sense of fulfilling ideals and/or being useful, either assisting the unfortunate, spreading a gospel or improving themselves in some way. For newcomers, organisations provided a means of making friends and adjusting to life in a new community. Many women obtained a chance to serve on a committee and take an executive role, possibly even speaking in public: women speakers were quite accepted by 1914. Many enjoyed this aspect, but all women could enjoy